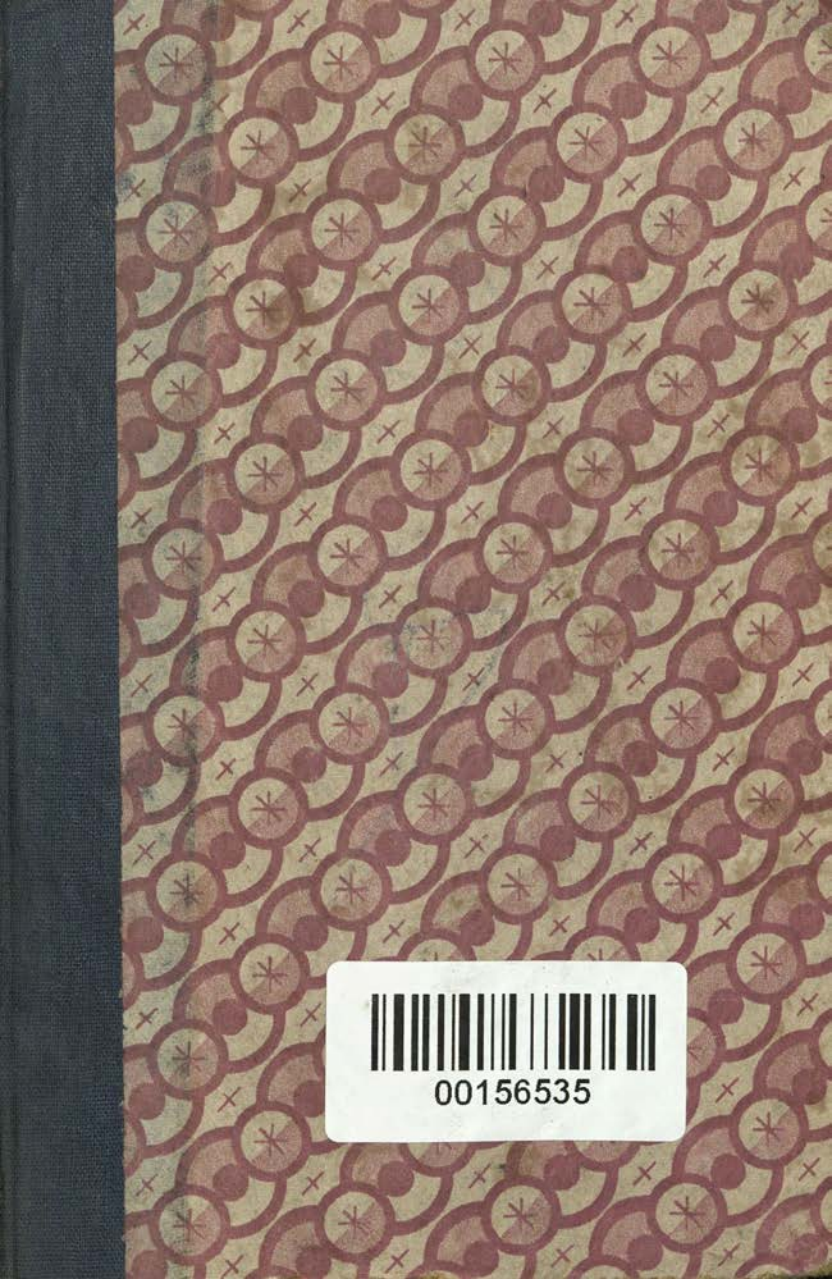

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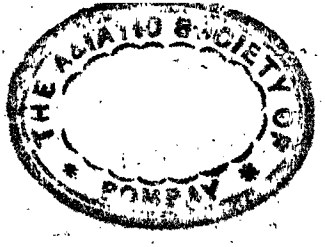
THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
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MEN OF HISTORY.

BY

EMINENT WRITERS.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

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Presented by:-
Mrs. S. Kolatkar
in memory of her
Father-Mr. Jehangir
Curshedji Katrak
Date....14-6-72

PREFACE.

THE object of the Editor in preparing this book for the public is a twofold one. First, to exhibit views of the characters of the world's great men; and, second, to present these views in the best words of the best authors—to convey, as it were, at once impressions of History and Literature, and lessons in Biography and Style.

In this double sense, the idea of the volume is submitted to be novel, while the utility of it is apparent. It gives to the general reader an excellent and instructive book; and it places before the young, lessons which will tend to excite emulation, by the exhibition of lofty examples, told in glowing language by the most eminent writers. It thus points itself out as being admirably adapted to aid in the formation of character in youth and early life.

The task of selection has been a perplexing one. In choosing the name of a great man, considerable and occasionally insurmountable difficulty was experienced in finding a portrait by an author sufficiently eminent to come within the requirements of the Editor's estimate. This will partly account for the absence of many names, the appearance of which will be considered almost indispensable in such a volume as the present.

EDINBURGH, *January* 1866.

CONTENTS.

KINGS AND CONQUERORS.		PAGE
ALEXANDER THE GREAT,	*Grote*,	9
JULIUS CÆSAR,	*De Quincey*,	13
MAHOMET,	*Gibbon*,	17
CHARLEMAGNE,	*Hallam*,	21
ALFRED,	*Hume*,	24
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR,	*Lyttleton*,	28
WALLACE,	*Tytler*,	32
ROBERT BRUCE,	*Tytler*,	35
PETER THE GREAT,	*Voltaire*,	38
CHARLES V.,	*Robertson*,	42
HENRY VIII.,	*Froude*,	44
OLIVER CROMWELL,	*Carlyle*,	47
CHARLES XII.,	*Voltaire*,	51
LORD CLIVE,	*Macaulay*,	54
WASHINGTON,	*Brougham*,	57
NELSON,	*Alison*,	60
Do.,	*Lamartine*,	62
SIR JOHN MOORE,	*Napier*,	64
WELLINGTON,	*Hugh Miller*,	66
NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE,	*Brougham*,	71

STATESMEN AND ORATORS.

		PAGE
CICERO,	*Professor Spalding*,	73
LORENZO DE MEDICI,	*Hallam*,	76
MACHIAVELLI,	*Sismondi*,	79
CARDINAL WOLSEY,	*Tytler*,	82
SIR THOMAS MORE,	*Tytler*,	85
THOMAS CROMWELL,	*Froude*,	88
SIR WALTER RALEIGH,	*Tytler*,	90
HAMPDEN,	*Macaulay*,	93
VISCOUNT FALKLAND,	*Clarendon*,	96
WILLIAM PITT, EARL OF CHATHAM,	*Macaulay*,	98
BURKE,	*Alison*,	101
WARREN HASTINGS,	*Macaulay*,	105
CHARLES FOX,	*Alison*,	108
TALLEYRAND,	*Brougham*,	112
WILLIAM PITT,	*Macaulay*,	115
MIRABEAU,	*George Gilfillan*,	118
ROBESPIERRE,	*George Gilfillan*,	122
PALMERSTON,	*Blackwood*,	125

PHILOSOPHERS AND MEN OF SCIENCE.

SOCRATES,	*Grote*,	129
PLATO,	*Brucker*,	134
ARISTOTLE,	*Brucker*,	138
COPERNICUS,	*Olmsted*,	142
LORD BACON,	*Macaulay*,	145
GALILEO,	*Sir David Brewster*,	148
KEPLER,	*Olmsted*,	150
DESCARTES,	*Hallam*,	154
LOCKE,	*Hallam*,	157
SIR ISAAC NEWTON,	*Voltaire*,	160

PHILOSOPHERS AND MEN OF SCIENCE—*Continued.* PAGE

LEIBNITZ,	*Dugald Stewart,*	163
BERKELEY,	*Dugald Stewart,*	166
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,	*Jeffrey,*	169
JAMES WATT,	*Jeffrey,*	172
LAPLACE,	*Playfair,*	176

POETS AND DRAMATISTS.

HOMER,	*Pope,*	179
VIRGIL,	*Professor Spalding,*	182
DANTE,	*Sismondi,*	184
PETRARCH,	*Professor Spalding,*	187
CHAUCER,	*Hazlitt,*	190
ARIOSTO,	*Sismondi,*	193
SPENSER,	*Hazlitt,*	196
TASSO,	*Sismondi,*	199
LOPE DE VEGA,	*Sismondi,*	203
SHAKESPEARE,	*Dryden—Blair,*	207
BEN JONSON,	*Dryden,*	210
CALDERON,	*Aug. W. Schlegel,*	212
CORNEILLE,	*Hallam,*	216
MILTON,	*Johnson,*	218
MOLIÈRE,	*Hallam,*	221
RACINE,	*Hallam,*	223
CONGREVE,	*Johnson,*	225
POPE,	*De Quincey,*	228
THOMSON,	*Johnson,*	231
COWPER,	*Jeffrey,*	233
ALVIERI,	*Sismondi,*	236
CHATTERTON,	*Thomas Campbell,*	239
BURNS,	*Carlyle,*	242

POETS AND DRAMATISTS—*Continued.*		PAGE
WORDSWORTH,	*De Quincey,*	245
COLERIDGE,	*Foster,*	248
THOMAS MOORE,	*Hazlitt,*	252
BYRON,	*Macaulay,*	255
SHELLEY,	*De Quincey,*	258

HISTORIANS, NOVELISTS, AND ESSAYISTS.

BOCCACCIO,	*Sismondi,*	261
RABELAIS,	*Hazlitt,*	264
MONTAIGNE,	*Hallam,*	266
CERVANTES,	*Sismondi,*	269
PASCAL,	*Hallam,*	272
SWIFT,	*Jeffrey,*	275
ADDISON,	*Johnson,*	279
VOLTAIRE,	*Hazlitt,*	282
SAMUEL JOHNSON,	*Sir J. Mackintosh,*	284
DAVID HUME,	*Professor Nichol,*	287
ROUSSEAU,	*Carlyle,*	290
GOLDSMITH,	*Johnstone,*	294
GIBBON,	*Prescott,*	297
GOETHE,	*Carlyle,*	301
SCHILLER,	*Carlyle,*	304
DE FOE,	*Hugh Miller,*	307
JEAN PAUL RICHTER,	*Carlyle,*	309
SIR WALTER SCOTT,	*Carlyle,*	311
MACAULAY,	*George Gilfillan,*	314
THACKERAY,	*Hannay,*	317



Kings and Conquerors.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

[BORN B.C. 356. DIED 323.]

GROTE.

AT the time when Lynkestian Alexander ran forward [amidst a conspiracy] to forestall resistance, and place the crown on the head of Alexander the Great, no one knew what to expect from the young prince, thus suddenly exalted at the age of twenty years. The sudden death of Philip, in the fulness of glory and ambitious hopes, must have produced the strongest impression, first upon the festive crowd, next throughout Macedonia, lastly among the foreigners whom he had reduced to dependence, from the Danube to the borders of Pœonia. All these dependencies were held only by the fear of Macedonian force. It remained to be proved whether the youthful son of Philip was capable of putting down opposition and upholding the powerful organisation created by his father. But Alexander, present and proclaimed at once by his friends, showed him-

self, both in word and deed, perfectly competent to the emergency. He mustered, caressed, and conciliated the divisions of the Macedonian army and the chief officers. His addresses were judicious and energetic, engaging that the dignity of the kingdom should be maintained unimpaired, and that even the Asiatic projects already proclaimed should be prosecuted with as much vigour as if Philip had still lived.

Amidst all the qualities which go to constitute the highest military excellence, either as a general or as a soldier, none was wanting in the character of Alexander. Together with his own chivalrous courage,—sometimes, indeed, both excessive and unseasonable, so as to form the only military defect which can be fairly imputed to him,—we trace in all his operations the most careful dispositions taken beforehand, vigilant precaution guarding against possible reverse, and abundant resource in adapting himself to new contingencies. Amidst constant success, those precautionary combinations were never discontinued. His achievements are the earliest recorded evidence of scientific military organisation on a large scale, and of its overwhelming effects. Alexander overawes the imagination more than any other personage of antiquity by the matchless development of all that constitutes effective force — as an individual warrior and an organiser and leader of armed masses; not merely the blind impetuosity ascribed by Homer to Ares, but also the intelligent, methodised, and all-subduing compression which he personifies in Athênê. But all his great qualities were fit for use only against enemies,—in which category, indeed, were numbered all mankind, known and unknown, except those who chose to submit to him. In his Indian campaigns, amidst tribes of utter strangers, we perceive that not only

those who stand in their defence, but also those who abandon their property and flee to the mountains, are alike pursued and slaughtered.

Apart from the transcendent merits of Alexander as a soldier and a general, some authors give him credit for grand and beneficent views on the subject of imperial government, and for intentions highly favourable to the improvement of mankind. I see no ground for adopting this opinion. As far as we can venture to anticipate what would have been Alexander's future, we see nothing in prospect except years of ever-repeated aggression and conquest, not to be concluded until he had traversed and subjugated all the inhabited globe. The acquisition of universal dominion—conceived, not metaphorically but literally, and conceived with greater facility in consequence of the imperfect geographical knowledge of the time, was the master passion of his soul. Though this sounds like romance and hyperbole, it was nothing more than the real insatiate aspiration of Alexander. Now, how an empire, thus boundless and heterogeneous, such as no prince has ever yet realised, could have been administered with any superior advantages to subjects, it would be difficult to show. The mere task of acquiring and maintaining—of keeping satraps and tribute-gatherers in authority, as well as in subordination—of suppressing resistances, ever liable to recur in regions distant by months of march—would occupy the whole life of a world conqueror, without leaving any leisure for the improvements suited to peace and stability, if we give him credit for such purposes in theory.

We read that Alexander felt so much interest in the extension of science, that he gave to Aristotle the immense sum of 800 talents in money, placing under his directions several thousand men, for the purpose of prosecuting zoological

researches. These exaggerations are probably the work of those enemies of the philosopher who decried him as a pensioner of the Macedonian court; but it is probable enough that Philip, and Alexander in the early part of his reign, may have helped Aristotle in the difficult process of getting together facts and specimens for observation, from esteem towards him personally, rather than from interest in his discoveries. The intellectual turn of Alexander was towards literature, poetry, and history. He was fond of the Iliad especially, as well as of the Attic tragedians; so that Harpalus, being directed to send some books to him in Upper Asia, selected, as the most acceptable packet, various tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, with the dithyrambic poems of Telestes, and the histories of Philistus.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

[BORN B.C. 100. DIED 44.]

DE QUINCEY.

IN general, the anecdotes which express most vividly the grandeur of character in the first Cæsar are those which illustrate his defiance of danger in extremity; the prodigious energy and rapidity of his decisions and motions in the field (looking to which it was that Cicero called him a τερας, or portentous revelation); the skill with which he penetrated the designs of his enemies, and the electric speed with which he met disasters with remedy and reparation, or, where that was impossible, with relief; the extraordinary presence of mind which he showed in turning adverse omens to his own advantage, as where, upon stumbling on coming on shore (which was esteemed a capital omen of evil), he transfigured, as it were in one instant, its whole meaning by exclaiming, "Thus, by this contact with the earth, do I take possession of thee, O Africa!"—in that way giving to an accident the semblance of a symbolic purpose. Equally conspicuous was the grandeur of fortitude with which he faced the whole extent of a calamity, when palliation could do no good, as when, upon finding his soldiery alarmed at the approach of Juba, with forces really great, but exaggerated by their terror, he addressed them in

a military harangue to the following effect:—"Know that within a few days the king will come up with us, bringing with him 60,000 legionaries, 30,000 cavalry, 100,000 light troops, besides 300 elephants. Such being the case, let me hear no more of conjectures and opinions, for you have now my warrant for the fact, whose information is past doubting." Finally, we might seek for characteristic anecdotes of him in his unexampled liberalities and contempt of money.

In connection with this subject of his extraordinary munificence, there is one aspect of Cæsar's life which has suffered much from the representations of historians, and that is, the vast pecuniary embarrassments under which he laboured, until the profits of war had turned the scale even more prodigiously in his favour. At one time of his life, when appointed to a foreign office, so numerous and so clamorous were his creditors, that he could not have left Rome on his public duties had not Crœsus come forward with assistance in money, or by guarantee, to the amount of nearly £200,000; and at another, he was accustomed to amuse himself by computing how much money it would require to make him worth exactly nothing—that is, simply to clear him of debt; this, by one account, amounted to upwards of two millions sterling. Now the error of historians has been to represent these debts as the original ground of his ambition and his revolutionary projects, as though the desperate condition of his private affairs had suggested a civil war to his calculation as the best or only mode of redressing it. It had become evident to everybody that Rome, under its present constitution, must fall; and the sole question was, by whom?

In person Cæsar was tall, fair, gracile, and of limbs distinguished for their elegant proportions. His eyes were

black and piercing. These circumstances continued to be long remembered, and no doubt were constantly recalled to the eyes of all persons in the imperial palaces by pictures, busts, and statues; for we find the same description of his personal appearance three centuries afterwards in a work of the Emperor Julian's. He was a most accomplished horseman, and a master in the use of arms. But, notwithstanding his skill in horsemanship, it seemed that when he accompanied his army on marches, he walked oftener than he rode,—no doubt with a view to the benefit of his example, and to express that sympathy with his soldiers which gained him their hearts so entirely. The carriage which he generally used was a *rheda*, and the length of journeys which he accomplished within a given time appears even to us at this day, and might well therefore appear to his contemporaries, truly astonishing. A journey of a hundred miles was no extraordinary day's journey for him in a *rheda*, such as we have described it.

Weakness there was none in Caius Cæsar; and, that there might be none, it was fortunate that conspiracy should have cut him off in the full vigour of his faculties, in the very meridian of his glory, and on the brink of completing a series of gigantic improvements. Among these are numbered a digest of the entire body of laws, even then become unwieldy and oppressive; the establishment of vast and comprehensive public libraries, Greek as well as Latin; the chastisement of Dacia, the conquest of Parthia, and the cutting a ship-canal through the Isthmus of Corinth; and, of all his projects, it may be said that they were equally patriotic in their purpose and colossal in their proportions. In literature, the merits of Cæsar are familiar to most readers. Under the modest title of Commentaries, he meant to offer the

records of his Gothic and British campaigns simply as notes or memoranda, afterwards to be worked up by regular historians; but, as Cicero observes, their merit was such that all judicious writers shrank from the attempt to alter them.

Was Cæsar, upon the whole, the greatest of men? "I," said Augustus Cæsar, "found Rome built of brick, but I left it built of marble." Well, my man, we reply, for a wondrously little chap, you did what in Westmoreland they call a good *darroch*—day's work; and if navvies had been wanted in those days, you should have had our vote to a certainty. But Caius Julius did a thing as much transcending this, as it was greater to project Rome across the Alps and the Pyrenees, expanding the grand Republic into crowning provinces.



MAHOMET.

[BORN 570. DIED 632.]

GIBBON.

AT the distance of twelve centuries, I darkly contemplate his shade through a cloud of religious incense; and could I truly delineate the portrait of an hour, the fleeting resemblance would not equally apply to the solitary of Mount Hera, to the preacher of Mecca, and to the conqueror of Arabia. The author of a mighty revolution seems to have been endowed with a pious and contemplative disposition. So soon as marriage had raised him above the pressure of want, he avoided the paths of ambition and avarice, and, till the age of forty, he lived with innocence, and would have died without a name. The unity of God is an idea most congenial to nature and reason, and a slight conversation with the Jews and Christians would teach him to despise and detest the idolatry of Mecca. It was the duty of a man and a citizen to impart the doctrine of salvation, to rescue his country from the dominion of sin and error. The energy of a mind incessantly bent on the same object, would convert a general obligation into a particular call; the warm suggestions of the understanding or the fancy would be felt as the inspirations of heaven; the labour of thought would expire in rapture and vision, and the inward sensation, the invisible monitor, would be de-

scribed with the form and attributes of an angel of God. From enthusiasm to imposture the step is perilous and slippery: the demon of Socrates affords a memorable instance how a wise man may deceive himself, how a good man may deceive others, how the conscience may slumber in a mixed, middle state between self-illusion and voluntary fraud. Charity may believe that the original motives of Mahomet were those of pure and genuine benevolence; but a human missionary is incapable of cherishing the obstinate unbelievers who reject his claims, despise his arguments, and persecute his life. He might forgive his personal adversaries, he may lawfully hate the enemies of God; the stern passions of pride and revenge were kindled in the bosom of Mahomet, and he sighed, like the prophet of Nineveh, for the destruction of the rebels whom he had condemned.

The injustice of Mecca and the choice of Medina transformed the citizen into a prince, the humble preacher into the leader of armies; but his sword was consecrated by the example of the saints, and the same God who afflicts a sinful world with pestilence and earthquakes, might inspire for their conversion or chastisement the valour of his servants. In the exercise of political government he was compelled to abate the stern rigour of fanaticism,—to comply, in some measure, with the prejudices and passions of his followers, and to employ even the vices of mankind as the instruments of their salvation. The use of fraud and perfidy, of cruelty and injustice, were often subservient to the propagation of the faith; and Mahomet commanded or approved the assassination of the Jews and idolators who had escaped from the field of battle. By the repetition of such acts, the character of Mahomet must have been gradually stained; and the influence of such pernicious habits would be partly compen-

sated by the practice of the personal and social virtues, which are necessary to maintain the reputation of a prophet among his sectaries and friends. Of his last years, ambition was his ruling passion; and a politician will suspect that he secretly smiled (the victorious impostor!) at the enthusiasm of his youth and the credulity of his proselytes.

A philosopher would observe that their cruelty and his success would tend more strongly to fortify the assurance of his divine mission; that his interest and religion were inseparably connected; and that his conscience would be soothed by the persuasion that he alone was absolved by the Deity from the obligation of positive and moral laws. If he retained any vestige of his native innocence, the sins of Mahomet may be allowed as the evidence of his sincerity. In the support of truth, the arts of fraud and fiction may be deemed less criminal; and he would have started at the foulness of the means, had he not been satisfied of the importance and justice of the end. Even in a conqueror or a priest, I can suppose a word or action of unaffected humanity; and the decree of Mahomet, that in the sale of captives the mothers should never be separated from the children, may suspend or moderate the censure of the historian.

The good sense of Mahomet despised the pomp of royalty. The apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire, swept the floor, milked the ewes, and mended with his own hand his shoes and woollen garment. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed without effort or vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab and a soldier. On solemn occasions he feasted his companions with rustic and hospitable plenty, but in his domestic life many weeks would elapse without a fire being kindled on the hearth of the prophet. The interdiction of

wine was confirmed by his example; his hunger was appeased by a sparing allowance of barley bread; he delighted in the taste of milk and honey; but his ordinary food consisted of dates and water: perfumes and women were the two sensual enjoyments which his nature required, and which his religion did not forbid; and Mahomet affirmed that the fervour of his devotion was increased by these innocent pleasures. The heat of the climate influences the blood of the Arabs, and their libidinous complexion has been noticed by the writers of antiquity. Their incontinence was regulated by the curt and religious laws of the Koran; their incestuous alliances were blamed; the boundless license of polygamy was reduced to four legitimate wives or concubines; their rights, both of bed and dowry, were equitably determined; the freedom of divorce was discouraged; adultery was condemned as a capital offence, and fornication in either sex was punished with one hundred stripes. Such were the calm and rational precepts of the legislator; but in his private life Mahomet indulged the appetites of a man, and abused the claims of a prophet.

CHARLEMAGNE.

[BORN 742. DIED 814.]

HALLAM.

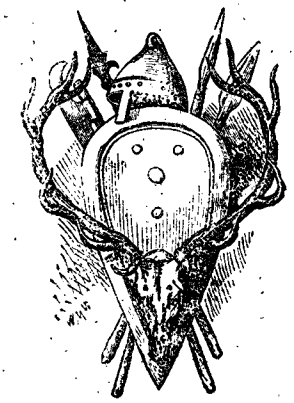
IN analysing the characters of heroes, it is hardly possible to separate altogether the share of fortune from their own. The epoch made by Charlemagne in the history of the world, the illustrious families which prided themselves in him as their progenitor, the very legends of romance which are filled with his fabulous exploits, have cast a lustre around his head, and testified the greatness that has embodied itself in his name. None, indeed, of Charlemagne's wars can be compared with the Saracenic victory of Charles Martel; but that was a contest for freedom: his, for conquest, and fame is more partial to successful aggression than to patriotic resistance. As a scholar, his acquisitions were probably little superior to those of his unrespected son; and in several points of view the glory of Charlemagne might be extenuated by an analytic dissection. But rejecting a mode of judging equally uncandid and fallacious, we shall find that he possessed in every thing that grandeur of conception which distinguishes extraordinary minds. Like Alexander, he seemed born for universal innovation. In a life restlessly active we see him reforming the coinage and establishing the legal divisions of money; gathering about him the learning of every country; founding schools and

collecting libraries; interfering, but with the tone of a king, in religious controversies; aiming, though prematurely, at the formation of a naval force; attempting, for the sake of commerce, the magnificent enterprise of uniting the Rhine and the Danube, and meditating to mould the discordant codes of Roman and barbarian laws into an uniform system.

The great qualities of Charlemagne were indeed alloyed by the vices of a barbarian and a conqueror. Nine wives, whom he divorced with very little ceremony, attest the license of his private life, which his temperance and frugality can hardly be said to redeem. Unsparing of blood, though not constitutionally cruel, and wholly indifferent to the means which his ambition presented, he beheaded in one day 4000 Saxons,—an act of atrocious butchery, after which his persecuting edicts, pronouncing the pain of death against those who refused baptism, or even who ate flesh during Lent, seem scarcely worthy of notice. This union of barbarous ferocity with elevated views of national improvement, might suggest the parallel of Peter the Great. But the degrading habits and brute violence of the Muscovite, place him at an immense distance from the restorer of the empire.

A strong sympathy for intellectual excellence was the leading characteristic of Charlemagne; and this undoubtedly biassed him in the chief political error of his conduct—that of encouraging the power and pretensions of the hierarchy. But perhaps his greatest eulogy is written in the disgraces of succeeding times and the miseries of Europe. He stands alone, like a beacon upon a waste or a rock in the broad ocean. His sceptre was the bow of Ulysses, which could not be drawn by any weaker hand. In the dark ages of European history, the reign of Charlemagne affords a solitary

resting-place between two long periods of turbulence and ignominy, deriving the advantages of contrast, both from that of the preceding dynasty, and of a posterity for whom he had formed an empire, which they were unworthy and unequal to maintain.



ALFRED.

[BORN 849. DIED 901.]

HUME.



PRINCE who gave very early marks of those great virtues and shining talents by which, during the most difficult times, he saved his country from utter ruin and subversion. Ethelwolf his father, the year after his return with Alfred from Rome, had again sent the young prince thither with a numerous retinue; and a report being spread of the king's death, Leo III. gave Alfred the royal unction, — whether prognosticating his future greatness from the appearances of his pregnant genius, or willing to pretend, even in that age, to the right of conferring kingdoms. Alfred on his return home became every day more the object of his father's affection; but being indulged in all youthful pleasures, he was much neglected in his education, and he had already reached his twelfth year, when he was yet totally ignorant of the lowest elements of literature. His genius was first roused by the recital of Saxon poems, in which the queen took great delight; and this species of erudition, which is sometimes able to make a considerable progress even among barbarians, expanded those noble and elevated sentiments which he had received from nature. Encouraged by the queen, and stimulated by his own ardent inclination, he soon learned to read these compositions, and proceeded

thence to acquire the knowledge of the Latin tongue, in which he met with authors that better prompted his heroic spirit and directed his generous views.

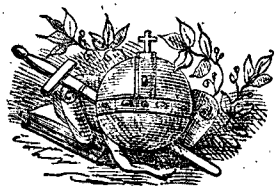
Absorbed in these elegant pursuits, he regarded his accession to royalty rather as an object of regret than of triumph; but being called to the throne in preference to his brother's children, as well by the will of his father,—a circumstance which had great authority with the Anglo-Saxons,—as by the vows of the whole nation and the urgency of public affairs, he shook off his literary indolence and exerted himself in the defence of his people.

The merit of this great prince, both in public and private life, may with advantage be set in opposition to that of any monarch or citizen which the annals of any age or any nation can present to us. He seems, indeed, to be the model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a sage or wise man, philosophers have been fond of delineating rather as a fiction of their imagination than in hopes of ever seeing it really existing—so happily were all his virtues tempered together, so justly were they blended, and so powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper boundaries. He knew how to reconcile the most enterprising spirit with the coolest moderation, the most obstinate perseverance with the easiest flexibility, the most severe justice with the gentlest lenity, the greatest vigour in commanding with the most perfect affability of deportment, the highest capacity and inclination for science with the most shining talents for action. His civil and military virtues are almost equally the objects of our admiration, excepting only that the former, being more rare among princes as well as more useful, seem chiefly to challenge our applause. Nature also, as if desirous that so bright a production of her

skill should be set in the fairest light, had bestowed on him every bodily accomplishment,—vigour of limbs, dignity of shape and air, with a pleasing, engaging, and open countenance. Fortune alone, by throwing him into that barbarous age, deprived him of historians worthy to transmit his fame to posterity; and we wish to see him delineated in more lively colours, and with more particular strokes, that we may at least discover some of those small specks and blemishes, from which, as a man, it is impossible he could be entirely exempted.

But we should give but an imperfect idea of Alfred's merit were we to confine our narrative to his military exploits, and were not more particular in our account of his institutions for the execution of justice, and of his zeal for the encouragement of arts and sciences. The most effectual expedient employed by Alfred for the encouragement of learning was his own example, and the constant assiduity with which, notwithstanding the multiplicity and urgency of his affairs, he employed himself in the pursuits of knowledge. He usually divided his time into three equal portions: one was employed in sleep and the refection of his body by diet and exercise; another in the despatch of business; a third in study and devotion; and that he might more exactly measure the hours, he made use of burning tapers of equal length, which he fixed in lanterns,—an expedient suited to that rude age, when the geometry of dialling and the mechanism of clocks and watches were entirely unknown. And by such a regular distribution of his time, though he often laboured under great bodily infirmities, this martial hero, who fought in person fifty-six battles by sea and land, was able, during a life of no extraordinary length, to acquire more knowledge, and even to compose more books, than

most studious men, though blessed with the greatest leisure and application, have in more fortunate ages made the object of their uninterrupted industry. Both living and dead, Alfred was regarded by foreigners, no less than by his own subjects, as the greatest prince after Charlemagne that had appeared in Europe during several ages, and as one of the wisest and best that ever adorned the annals of any nation.



WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

[BORN 1027. DIED 1087.]

LYTTLETON.

ONE who may with justice be ranked among the greatest generals any age has produced. There were united in him activity, vigilance, intrepidity, caution, great force of judgment, and never-failing intrepidity of mind. He was strict in his discipline, and kept his soldiers in perfect obedience, yet preserved their affection. Having been from his very childhood continually at war and at the head of armies, he joined to all the capacity that genius could give, all the knowledge and skill that experience could teach, and was a perfect master of the military art as it was practised in the times wherein he lived. His constitution enabled him to endure any hardships, and very few were equal to him in personal strength, which was in his time an excellence of more importance than it is now, from the manner of fighting then in use. It is said of him that none except himself could bend his bow. His courage was heroic; and he possessed it not only in the field, but, which is more uncommon, in the cabinet—attempting great things with means that to other men appeared totally unequal to such undertakings, and steadily prosecuting what he had boldly resolved; being never disturbed nor dishearteńed by difficulties in the course of his enterprises, but having that

noble vigour of mind, which, instead of bending to opposition, rises against it, and seems to have a power of controlling fortune herself.

Nor was he less superior to pleasure than to fear; no luxury softened him, no riot disordered, no sloth relaxed. It helped not a little to maintain the high respect his subjects had for him, that the majesty of his character was never let down by an incontinent or indecent excess. His temperance and his chastity were constant guards that secured his mind from all weakness, supported his dignity, and kept it always, as it were, on the throne. Had he kept his oaths to his people as well as he did his marriage vow, he would have been the best of kings; but he indulged other passions of a worse nature, and infinitely more detrimental to the public than those he restrained. A lust of power which no regard of justice could limit, the most unrelenting cruelty, and the most insatiable avarice, possessed his soul. It is true, indeed, that, among many acts of extreme inhumanity, some shining instances of great clemency may be produced, that were either the effects of his policy, which taught him this method of acquiring friends, or of his magnanimity, which made him slight a weak and subdued enemy, such as was Edgar Atheling, in whom he found neither spirit nor talents able to contend with him for the crown. But where he had no advantage or pride in forgiving, his nature discovered itself to be utterly void of all sense of compassion; and some barbarities he committed exceed the bounds that even tyrants and conquerors prescribe to themselves.

Most of our ancient historians give him the character of a very religious prince; but his religion was after the fashion of those times—belief without examination, devotion without piety; it was a religion that prompted him to endow mon-

asteries, and at the same time allowed him to pillage kingdoms; that threw him on his knees before a relic or cross, but suffered him unrestrained to trample upon the liberties and rights of mankind.

As to his wisdom in government, of which some modern writers have spoken very highly, he was indeed so far wise, that through a long and unquiet reign he knew how to support oppression by terror, and employ the properest means for carrying on a very iniquitous and violent administration. But that which alone deserves the name of wisdom in the character of a king, the maintaining of authority by the exercise of those virtues which make the happiness of a people, was what, with all his abilities, he does not appear to have possessed. Nor did he excel in those soothing and popular arts, which sometimes change the complexion of tyranny and give it the fallacious appearance of freedom. His government was harsh and despotic, violating even the principles of that constitution which he himself had established. Yet, so far he performed the duty of a sovereign, that he took care to maintain a good police in his realm, curbing licentiousness with a strong hand, which, in the tumultuous state of his government, was a great and difficult work. How well he performed it we may learn even from the testimony of a contemporary Saxon historian, who says, that during his reign a man might have travelled in perfect security all over the kingdom with his bosom full of gold, nor durst any kill another in revenge of the greatest offences. But it was a poor compensation that the highways were safe, when the courts of justice were dens of thieves, and when almost every man in authority or in office used his power to oppress and pillage the people. The king himself did not only tolerate, but encourage, support, and share even these

extortions, though the greatness of the ancient landed estate of the crown, and the feudal profits to which he was legally entitled, rendered him one of the richest monarchs in Europe. He was not content with all that opulence; but by authorising the sheriffs, who collected his revenues in the several counties, to practise the most grievous exactions, vexations, and abuses for the raising of them higher; by a perpetual auction of the crown lands, so that none of his tenants could be secure of possession if any other would come and offer more; by various iniquities in the Court of Exchequer, which was entirely Norman; by forfeitures wrongfully taken; and, lastly, by arbitrary and illegal taxations, he drew into his treasury much too great a proportion of the wealth of his kingdom.



WALLACE.

[BORN 1270. DIED 1305.]

TYTLER.

AT this time, and out of this middle class of the lesser barons, arose an extraordinary individual, who, at first driven into the field by a desire to avenge his individual injuries, within a short period of time, in the reconquest of his native country, developed a character which may, without exaggeration, be termed heroic. This was William Wallace or Wallays, the second son of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Ellerslie near Paisley, a simple knight, whose family was ancient, but neither rich nor noble. In those days, bodily strength and knightly prowess were of the highest consequence in commanding respect and insuring success. Wallace had an iron frame. His make, as he grew up to manhood, approached almost to the gigantic, and his personal strength was superior to the common run of even the strongest men. His passions were hasty and violent. A strong hatred to the English, who now insolently lorded it over Scotland, began to show itself at a very early period of his life; and this aversion was fostered in the youth by an uncle, a priest, who, deploring the calamities of his country, was never weary of extolling the sweets of liberty and lamenting the miseries of dependence.

The intrepid temper of Wallace appears first to have

shown itself in a quarrel in the town of Lanark with some of the English officers who insulted him. This led to bloodshed; and he would have been overpowered and slain in the street, had it not been for the interference of his mistress, to whose house he fled, and by whose assistance he escaped to the neighbouring woods. In a spirit of impotent revenge, Hislop, the English sheriff, attacked the house and put her to death, for which he was himself assaulted and slain by Wallace. The consequence of this was to him the same as to many others, who at this time preferred a life of dangerous freedom to the indulgence and security of submission. He was proclaimed a traitor, banished his home, and driven to seek his safety in the wilds and fastnesses of his country. It was here that he collected by degrees a little band, composed at first of a few brave men of desperate fortunes, who had forsworn their vassalage to their lords, and refused submission to Edward, and who at first carried on that predatory warfare against the English, to which they were impelled, as well by the desire of plunder and the necessity of subsistence as by the love of liberty. These men chose Wallace for their chief. Superior rank,—for as yet none of the nobility or barons had joined them,—his uncommon courage and personal strength, and his unconquerable thirst of vengeance against the English, naturally influenced their choice, and the result proved how well it had fallen. His plans were laid with so much judgment that, in his first attacks against straggling parties of the English, he was generally successful; and, if surprised by unexpected numbers, his superior strength and bravery, and the noble ardour with which he inspired his followers, enabled them to overpower every effort which was made against them.

To him those early desultory excursions against the enemy

were highly useful, as he became acquainted with the strongest passes of his country, and acquired habits of command over men of fierce and turbulent spirits. To them the advantage was reciprocal, for they began gradually to feel an undoubting confidence in their leader. They were accustomed to rapid marches, to endure fatigue and privation, to be on their guard against surprise, to feel the effects of discipline and obedience, and, by the successes which these insured, to regard with contempt the nation by whom they had allowed themselves to be overcome.

Soon after his return from an expedition into England, Wallace, in an assembly held at the Forest Kirk in Selkirkshire, which was attended by the Earl of Lennox, William Douglas, and others of the principal nobility, was elected Governor of Scotland, in name of King John and with consent of the community of Scotland. Strengthened by this high title, which he so well deserved, and which the common people believed was ratified by the express approval of St Andrew, who presented to the hero a blood-stained sword, to be used in his battles against the English, he proceeded to reward his friends and fellow-soldiers, to threaten and punish his enemies, and, despising the jealousy and desertion of a great portion of the nobility, to adopt and enforce those public measures which he considered necessary for securing the liberty of his country.

ROBERT BRUCE.

[BORN 1274. DIED 1329.]

TYTLER.

ONE who undoubtedly belongs to that race of heroic men, regarding whom we are anxious to learn even the commonest particulars. But living at so remote a period, the lighter shades and touches which confer individuality are lost in the distance; we only see, through the mists which time has cast around it, a figure of colossal proportion walking amid his shadowy peers; and it is deeply to be regretted that the ancient chroniclers, whose pencil might have brought him before us as fresh and true as when he lived, have disdained to notice many minute circumstances with which we now seek in vain to become acquainted. Yet some faint idea of his person may be gathered from the few scattered touches preserved by those authors; and the greater outlines of his character are too strongly marked to escape us.

In his figure, the king was tall and well shaped. Before broken down by illness, and in the prime of life, he was nearly six feet high, his hair curled closely and shortly round his neck, which possessed that breadth and thickness which belong to men of great strength; he was broad-shouldered and open-chested, and the proportion of his limbs combined power with lightness and activity. Those qualities were

increased not only by his constant occupation in war, but by his fondness for the chase and all manly amusements. It is not known whether he was dark or fair complexioned; but his forehead was low, his cheekbones strong and prominent, and the general expression of his countenance open and cheerful, although he was maimed by a wound which had injured his lower jaw. His manners were dignified and engaging; after battle nothing could be pleasanter or more courteous; and it is infinitely to his honour that, in a savage age, and smarting under injuries which attacked him in his kindest and tenderest relations, he never abused a victory, but conquered often as effectually by his generosity and kindness as by his great military talents. We know, however, from his interview with the Papal legates, that when he chose to express displeasure, his look was stern and kingly, and at once imposed silence and insured obedience. He excelled in all the exercises of chivalry to such a degree, indeed, that the English themselves did not scruple to account him the third best knight in Europe. His memory was stored with the romances of the period, in which he took great delight. Their hair-breadth escapes and perilous adventures were sometimes scarcely more wonderful than his own; and he had early imbibed from such works an appetite for individual enterprise and glory, which, had it not been checked by a stronger passion,—the love of liberty,—might have led him into fatal mistakes. It is quite conceivable that Bruce, instead of a great king, might, like Richard I., have become only a kingly knight-errant.

But from this error he was saved by the love of his country, directed by an admirable judgment, an unshaken perseverance, and a vein of strong good sense. It is here, though many think it the homeliest, that we are to find assuredly

the brightest part of the character of the king. It is these qualities which are especially conspicuous in his long war for the liberty of Scotland. They enabled him to follow out his plans through many a tedious year with undeviating energy, to bear reverses, to calculate his means, to wait for his opportunities, and to concentrate his whole energies on one great point, till it was gained and secured to his country for ever.



PETER THE GREAT.

[BORN 1239. DIED 1285.]

VOLTAIRE.

PETER ALEXIWITZ had received an education, the tendency of which was to have yet further augmented the barbarism of his empire. His natural disposition had already given him a liking for strangers before he perceived in what points they might be useful to him. Le Fort was the first instrument of whom he made use for changing, for all time coming, the face of Muscovy. Peter's powerful genius, which might have been destroyed by a barbarian education, developed itself nearly all in a moment: he resolved to be a man to command men and to create a new nation. Several princes had renounced crowns before him from disgust at the burden of business, but no one had ceased to be a king that he might learn the better how to reign. This was what Peter the Great did. He quitted Russia in 1698, having as yet only reigned two years, and went to Holland, disguised under a common name, as if he had been a servant of the above-mentioned Le Fort, whom he despatched as ambassador-extraordinary to the States-General. Arrived at Amsterdam, having entered his name on the list of carpenters of the admiralty of the Indies, he there worked in the wood-yard like the other carpenters. In the intervals of work, he learned those portions of mathema-

tics which were likely to be useful to a prince—fortification, navigation, the art of drawing plans. He entered the workmen's shops, examined all sorts of manufactures,—nothing escaped his observation. From thence he passed into England, where he perfected himself in the art of shipbuilding. He recrossed to Holland, and saw everything that might be turned to the advantage of his country. Finally, after two years of travels and labours, to which no other man would have been willing to subject himself, he re-appeared in Russia, bearing with him the arts of Europe. Artisans of every description followed him in crowds. For the first time, great Russian vessels were seen on the Black Sea, on the Baltic, and on the ocean; in the midst of Muscovite huts, edifices in a regular and noble style of architecture were erected. He established colleges, academies, printing-offices, libraries; little by little, although with difficulty, customs changed. The Muscovites came to know by degrees what constitutes society. Superstitions even were abolished, the dignity of patriarch was done away with, the Czar declared himself chief of religion; and this last enterprise, which would have cost a less absolute prince both his throne and his life, succeeded almost without a dissenting voice, and secured for him the success of all other new schemes.

He was constantly travelling through his dominions, whenever his wars would permit of his doing so; but he travelled in the capacity of legislator and physician, examining nature, everywhere seeking to correct and perfect it—in person sounding the depths of rivers and seas, ordering works to be made, visiting wood-yards, causing mines to be sunk, assaying metals, having exact maps laid down, and working at them with his own hand.

He built in a wild desert his imperial city of Petersburg, which now contains 60,000 houses, where in our days a brilliant Court has fixed its seat, and refined pleasures are enjoyed. He built the fort of Cronstadt on the Neva, St Croix on the frontiers of Persia, forts in the Ukraine in Siberia, admiralties at Archangel, at Petersburg, at Astracan, at Azov—arsenals, hospitals. He made all his houses small and in bad taste; but for his public buildings he was prodigal in magnificence and grandeur.

The sciences, which elsewhere have been the slow fruit of so many centuries, through his care arrived in his dominions in full perfection. He founded an academy on the model of the famous societies of Paris and London; and De Lisle, Balfinger, Hermann Bernouilli, the celebrated Wolf,—a man who excelled in every species of philosophy,—were brought to Petersburg at great expense. This academy still exists, and at length is composed of Muscovite philosophers.

He compelled the young nobility of his dominions to travel to be educated, to bring back with them to Russia the polished manners of the foreigner. I have seen young Russians full of talent and knowledge. Thus is it that a single man has changed the largest empire of the world. It is frightful that humanity, that cardinal virtue, should have been wanting to this reformer of men. Brutality in his pleasures, ferocity in his manners, barbarity in his vengeance, were mingled with so many virtues. He refined his subjects, and he was himself a savage. He has acted as executioner of his sentences on criminals with his own hands; and in a debauch of the table has given proof of his adroitness in cutting heads off. There are in Africa sovereigns who shed the blood of their subjects with their own hands, but these monarchs pass for barbarians. The

death of a son, whom it was necessary for him either to correct or disinherit, would render odious the memory of Peter, if the blessings which he conferred on his subjects did not almost make us pardon this cruelty towards his own blood.



CHARLES V.

[BORN 1500. DIED 1558.]

ROBERTSON.

FRANCIS I., who mounted the throne of France in 1515, and Charles V., who obtained the imperial crown in the year 1519, divided between them the strength and affections of all Europe. Charles succeeded to all the dominions of the house of Austria. No family had ever gained so much by wise and fortunate marriages. By acquisitions of this kind the Austrian princes rose in a short time from obscure counts of Hapsburg to be archdukes of Austria and kings of Bohemia, and were in possession of imperial dignity by a sort of hereditary right. Besides these territories in Germany, Charles was heir to the crown of Spain, and to all the dominions which belonged to the house of Burgundy. The Burgundian provinces engrossed at that time the riches and commerce of one half of Europe, and he drew from them on many occasions those immense sums, which no people without trade and liberty are able to contribute. Spain furnished him with a gallant and hardy infantry, to whose discipline he was indebted for all his conquests; and, at the same time, by the discovery of the new world, a vein of wealth was opened to him, which all the extravagance of ambition could not exhaust. These advantages rendered Charles the first

prince in Europe; but he wished to be more, and openly aspired to universal monarchy. His genius was of that kind which rises slowly, and lies long concealed; but it grew up without observation to an unexpected height and vigour. He possessed, in an eminent degree, the characteristic virtues of all the different races of princes to whom he was allied. In forming his schemes, he discovered all the subtlety and penetration of Ferdinand his grandfather; he pursued them with that obstinate and inflexible perseverance, which has ever since been peculiar to the Austrian blood; and in executing them he could employ the magnanimity and boldness of his Burgundian ancestors. His ability was equal to his power, and neither of them would have been inferior to his designs, had not Providence, in pity to mankind, and in order to preserve them from the worst of all evils—universal monarchy—raised up Francis I. to defend the liberty of Europe. His dominions were less extensive but more united than the emperor's. His subjects were more numerous, active, and warlike,—lovers of glory, and lovers of their king. To Charles, power was the only object of desire, and he pursued it with an unwearied and joyless industry. Francis could mingle pleasure and elegance with his ambition; and though he neglected some advantages which a more phlegmatic or more frugal prince would have improved, an active and intrepid courage supplied all his defects, and checked or defeated many of the emperor's designs. The rest of Europe observed all the motions of these mighty rivals with a jealous attention.

HENRY VIII.

[BORN 1491. DIED 1547.]

FROUDE.

THIS king had many faults; but his position was one of unexampled difficulty; and by the work which he accomplished, and the conditions, external and internal, under which his task was allotted to him, he, like every other man, ought to be judged. He was inconsistent; he can bear the reproach of it. He ended by accepting and approving what he had commenced with persecuting. Yet it was with the honest inconsistency which distinguishes the conduct of most men of practical ability in times of change, and even by virtue of which they obtain their success. If, at the commencement of the movement, he had regarded the eucharist as a "remembrance," he must either have concealed his convictions, or he would have forfeited his throne. If he had been a stationary bigot, the Reformation might have waited for a century, and would have been conquered only by an internecine war.

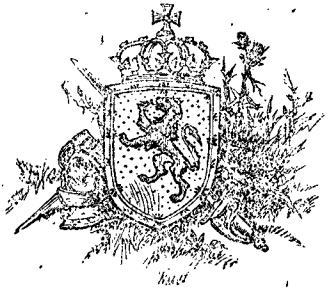
Protestants have exclaimed against the Six Articles Bill; Romanists against the Act of Supremacy. Philosophers complain that the prejudices of the people were needlessly violated, that opinions should have been allowed to be free, and the reformation of religion left to be accomplished by

reason. The Six Articles Bill was cruel; yet the governing classes, even among the laity, were unanimous in its favour. The king was not converted by a sudden miracle; he believed the traditions in which he had been trained; his eyes, like the eyes of others, opened but slowly; and, unquestionably, had he conquered for himself, in their fulness, the modern principles of toleration, he could not have governed by them a nation which was itself intolerant.

That the Romanists should have regarded him as a tyrant is natural; and, were it true that England's subjects owed fealty to the Pope, their feeling was just. But however desirable it may be to leave religion unfettered, it is certain that that of England was legitimately free. She could tolerate no difference of opinion on a question of allegiance, so long as Europe was conspiring to bring her back into slavery. So long as the Romanists refused to admit, without mental reservation, that, if foreign enemies invaded this country in the Pope's name, their place must be at the side of their own sovereign, religion might palliate the moral guilt of their treason, but it could not exempt them from its punishment.

Beyond and besides the Reformation, the constitution of these islands now rests, in large measure, on foundations laid in this reign. Henry brought Ireland within the reach of English civilisation. He absorbed Wales and the palatinate into the general English system. He it was who raised the House of Commons from the narrow duty of voting supplies, and of passing without discussion the measures of the Privy Council, and converted them into the first power of the State under the Crown. When he ascended the throne, so little did the Commons care for their privileges, that their attendance at the sessions of Parliament was enforced by a law. They woke into life in 1529, and they be-

came the right-hand of the king, to subdue the resistance of the House of Lords, and to force upon them a course of legislation, which from their hearts they detested. Something, too, ought to be said of his individual exertions in the details of State administration. In his earlier life, though active and assiduous, he found leisure for elegant accomplishments, for splendid amusements, for relaxations—careless, extravagant, sometimes questionable. As his life drew onwards, his lighter tastes disappeared, and the whole energy of his intellect was pressed into the business of the Commonwealth. His personal faults were great, and he shared, besides them, in the errors of his age; but far deeper blemishes would be but scars upon the features of a sovereign, who, in trying times, sustained nobly the honour of the English name, and carried the Commonwealth securely through the hardest crisis of its history.



OLIVER CROMWELL.

[BORN 1599. DIED 1658.]

CARLYLE.

THE young Oliver is sent to study law; falls, or is said to have fallen, for a little period into some of the dissipations of youth; but if so, speedily repents, abandons all this. Not much above twenty he is married, settled as an altogether grave and quiet man. "He pays back what money he had won at gambling," says the story; he does not think that any gain of that kind could be really his. It is very natural, very interesting, this conversion, as they well name it; this awakening of a great, true soul from the worldly slough to see into the awful truth of things,—to see that Time and its shows are all rested on Eternity, and this poor Earth of ours was the threshold either of Heaven or of Hell. Oliver's life at St Ives and Ely as a sober, industrious farmer, is it not altogether as that of a true and devout man? He has renounced the world and its ways; *its* prizes are not the thing that can enrich him. He tills the earth; he reads his Bible; daily assembles his servants round him to worship God. He comforts persecuted ministers; is fond of preachers; nay, can himself preach; exhorts his neighbours to be sure to redeem the time. In all this, what "hypocrisy," "ambition," "cant," or other falsity? The man's hopes, I do believe, were fixed on the other, higher world; his aim to get well thither by walking well through his humble course in this world He courts no

notice. What could notice here do for him? "Ever in his Great Taskmaster's eye."

It is striking, too, how he comes out at once into public view,—he, since no other is willing to come,—in resistance to a public grievance—I mean in that matter of the Bedford Fens. No one else will go to law with authority, therefore he will. That matter once settled, he returns back into obscurity, to his Bible and his plough. "Gain influence?" His influence is the most legitimate; derived from personal knowledge of him as a just, religious, reasonable, and determined man. In this way he has lived till past forty; old age is now in view of him, and the earnest portal of Death and Eternity—it was at this point that he suddenly became "ambitious." I do not interpret his Parliamentary mission in that way.

His successes in Parliament, his successes through the war, are honest successes of a brave man, who has more resolution in the heart of him, more light in the head of him, than other men. His prayer to God; his spoken thanks to the God of victory, who had preserved him safe and carried him forward so far through the furious clash of a world all set in conflict through desperate-looking development at Dunbar; through the death-hail of so many battles; mercy after mercy to the "crowning mercy" of Worcester fight; all this is good and genuine for a deep-hearted Calvinistic Cromwell. Only to vain, unbelieving cavaliers, worshipping not God but their own "love-locks," frivolities and formalities, living quite apart from contemplation of God, living without God in the world, need it seem hypocritical.

Nor will his participation in the king's death involve him in condemnation with us. It is a stern business killing of a king. But if you once go to war with him it lies there; this

and all else lies there. Once at war, you have made wager of battle with him; it is he to die, or else you. Reconciliation is problematic; may be possible, or, far more likely, impossible. It is now pretty generally admitted that the Parliament, having vanquished Charles I., had no way of making any tenable arrangements with him. The large Presbyterian party, apprehensive now of the Independents, were most anxious to do so, anxious, indeed, as for their own existence; but it could not be. The unhappy Charles, in these Hampton Court negotiations, shows himself as a man fatally incapable of being dealt with. A man who, once for all, could not, and would not *understand*—whose thoughts did not in any measure represent to him the real fact of the matter; nay, worse, whose word did not at all represent his thought. You must get out of that man's way, or put him out of yours. The Presbyterians, in their despair, were still for believing Charles, though found false, —unbelievable again and again. Not so Cromwell—"For all our fighting," says he, "we are to have a little bit of paper—No."

In fact, everywhere we have to note the practical eye of this man; how he drives towards the practical and practicable; has a genuine insight into what *is* fact. Such an intellect, I maintain, does not belong to a false man; the false man sees false shows, plausibilities, expediencies: the true man discerns even practical truth. Cromwell's advice about the Parliamentary army early in the contest—how they were to dismiss their city tapsters, flimsy, riotous persons, and choose substantial yeomen, whose heart was in the work, to be soldiers for them; this is advice by a man who *saw*. Fact answers if you see into Fact. Cromwell's Ironsides were the embodiment of this insight of his—men

fearing God, and without any other fear. No more conclusively genuine set of fighters ever trod the soil of England, or of any other land. The successes of Cromwell seem to me a very natural thing. Since he was not shot in battle, they were an inevitable thing. That a just man, with the eye to see, with the heart to dare, should advance from post to post, from victory to victory, till the Huntingdon farmer became, by whatever name you might call him, the acknowledged strongest man in England, virtually the King of England, requires no magic to explain it.

Poor Cromwell! Great Cromwell! The inarticulate prophet—prophet who could not speak: Rude, confused, struggling to utter himself with his savage depths, with his wild sincerity; and he looked so strange among the elegant Euphuisms, dandy little Falklands, didactic Chillingworths, diplomatic Clarendons! Consider him. An outer hull of chaotic confusion; visions of the devil; nervous dreams; almost some madness; and yet such a clear, determinate man's energy working in the heart of that—a kind of chaotic man. The rays of pure star-light and fire working in such an element of boundless hypochondria, unformed blank of darkness! And yet, with all this hypochondria, what was it but the very greatness of the man! The depth and tenderness of his wild affections; the quantity of sympathy he had with things; the quantity of insight he would yet get into the heart of things; the mastery he would yet get over things—this was his hypochondria. The man's misery, as man's misery always does, came of his greatness. Samuel Johnson, too, is that kind of man—sorrow-stricken, half distracted; the wide element of mournful blank enveloping him wide as the world.

CHARLES XII

[BORN 1682. DIED 1718.]

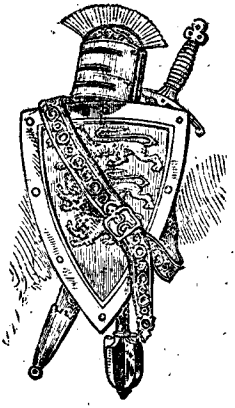
VOLTAIRE.

HARLES XII. was tall, and with noble presence. His forehead was high, his eyes blue and soft, and his nose very well formed; but the lower part of his face was not agreeable, being often disfigured by a smile which did not extend beyond the lips. He had very little of beard, and not much hair. He spoke very little, and did not respond much, except by the smile already mentioned. There was at his table a profound silence. He had preserved, in the inflexibility of his character, that timidity which goes under the name of bashfulness. He was generally embarrassed in conversation, in consequence of having devoted himself so much to toil and war, and mixed so little in society. He had, during his leisure among the Turks, read only Cæsar's Commentaries and the Life of Alexander; but he had written some reflections upon the war and the campaigns from 1700 to 1709, which were lost in the unfortunate affair of Pultowa. Some persons have wished it to be believed that he was a good mathematician. He had certainly a penetrating spirit, but there is no evidence that he had made much progress in the study of mathematics. He had formed an idea as to arithmetic, proposing to count by the number 64 in place of 10, because it contained a cube as

well as a square, might be halved and reduced in the ultimate to unity. The notion proved little more than his love for what was extraordinary or difficult. As regards his religion, though the sentiments of a prince ought not to influence other men, and the opinions of one so little instructed in such matters can have no great weight, it is necessary to satisfy the curiosity of the world, which has regarded the minutest parts of the character of this king. I know, from him to whom I am indebted for my materials for the history of Charles, that he was a very good Lutheran up to 1707. At that time, he saw at Leipsic the famous philosopher Leibnitz, who had already inspired with his liberal sentiments many others; but I do not believe that Charles showed, as has been said, any indifference for Lutheranism, in a conversation which probably did not last more than a quarter of an hour. M. Fabricius, however, who had the privilege of being near him for seven years consecutively, said that, having seen, during his stay among the Turks, different forms of faith, he came to view religion with more indifference. La Motraye himself confirms this idea; and the Count de Croissy, adding his sanction, declares that the prince retained no more of the principles in which he had been educated than his notion of an absolute predestination, which favoured his courage and justified his temerity. The Czar entertained similar sentiments in regard to religion and destiny; but he spoke on the subject more frequently, for he indulged in familiar conversation with his favourites, and possessed, in contradistinction to Charles, a knowledge of philosophy and a gift of eloquence.

I cannot resist allusion here to a calumny revived often on the death of princes, that, as pretended by wicked or credulous men, they are either poisoned or assassinated.

The report was spread in Germany that it was M. Siquier himself who killed the King of Sweden. That brave officer long desponded under this calumny. He said to me that he might have killed him, but that, if he had wished it, he could not, from respect to the hero, have dared.



LORD CLIVE.

[BORN 1725. DIED 1774.

MACAULAY.

SOME lineaments of the character of the man were early discerned in the child. There remain letters written by his relations when he was in his seventh year; and from these letters it appears, that even at that early age his strong will and his fiery passions, sustained by a constitutional intrepidity, which sometimes seemed hardly compatible with soundness of mind, had begun to cause great uneasiness to his family. "Fighting," says one of his uncles, "to which he is out of measure addicted, gives his temper such a fierceness and imperiousness, that he flies out on every trifling occasion." The old people of the neighbourhood still remember [1840] to have heard from their parents how Bob Clive climbed to the top of the lofty steeple of Market Drayton, and with what terror the inhabitants saw him seated on a stone spout near the summit. They also relate how he formed all the lads of the town into a kind of predatory army, and compelled the shopkeepers to submit to a tribute of apples and halfpence, in consideration of which he guaranteed the security of their windows. He was sent from school to school, making very little progress in his learning, and gaining for himself everywhere the character of being an exceeding naughty boy. One of his

masters, it is said, was sagacious enough to prophecy that the idle lad would make a great figure in the world. But the general opinion seems to have been that poor Bob was a dunce, if not a reprobate. His family expected nothing good from such slender parts, and such a headstrong temper. It is not strange, therefore, that they gladly accepted for him, when in his eighteenth year, a writership in the service of the East India Company, and shipped him off to make a fortune, or die of a fever, at Madras.

From his first visit to India dates the renown of the English arms in the East. Till he appeared, his countrymen were despised as mere pedlars, while the French were revered as a people formed for victory and command. His courage and capacity dissolved the charm. With the defence of Arcot commences that long period of Oriental triumphs, which closes with the fall of Ghizni. Nor must we forget that he was only twenty-five years old when he approved himself ripe for military command. From his second visit to India dates the political ascendancy of the English in that country. His dexterity and resolution realised, in the course of a few months, more than all the gorgeous visions which had floated before the imagination of Dupleix. Such an extent of cultivated territory, such an amount of revenue, such a multitude of subjects, was never added to the dominion of Rome by the most successful pro-consul; nor were such wealthy spoils ever borne under arches of triumph down the Sacred Way, and through the crowded forum, to the threshold of Tarpeian Jove. The fame of those who subdued Antiochus and Tigranes grows dim, when compared with the splendours of the exploits which the young English adventurer achieved, at the head of an army not equal in numbers to one-half of a Roman

legion. From Clive's third visit to India dates the purity of the administration of our Eastern empire. When he landed in Calcutta in 1765, Bengal was regarded as a place to which Englishmen were sent only to get rich, by any means, in the shortest possible time. He first made dauntless and unsparing war on that gigantic system of oppression, extortion, and corruption. In that war he manfully put to hazard his ease, his fame, and his splendid fortune. The same sense of justice which forbids to conceal or extenuate the faults of his earlier days, compels us to admit that these faults were nobly repaired. If the reproach of the Company and its servants has been taken away—if in India the yoke of foreign masters, elsewhere the heaviest of all yokes, has been found lighter than that of any native dynasty—if to that gang of public robbers, which formerly spread terror through the whole plain of Bengal, has succeeded a body of functionaries not more highly distinguished by ability and diligence than by integrity and public spirit—if we now see such men as Munro, Elphinstone, and Metcalfe, after leading victorious armies, after making and deposing kings, return, proud of their honourable poverty, from a land which first held out to every greedy factor the hope of boundless wealth,—the praise is in no small measure due to Clive.



WASHINGTON.

[BORN 1732. DIED 1799.]

BROUGHAM.

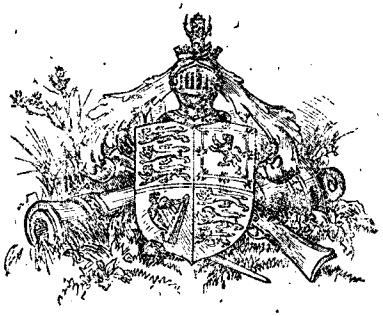


N this man we truly behold a marvellous contrast to almost every one of the endowments and vices which we have been contemplating, and which are so well fitted to excite a mingled admiration and sorrow and abhorrence. With none of that brilliant genius which dazzles ordinary minds; with not even any remarkable quickness of apprehension; with knowledge less than almost all persons in the middle ranks, and many well-educated of the humbler classes, possess—this eminent person is presented to our observation clothed in attributes as modest as unpretending; as little calculated to strike or astonish as if he had passed unknown through some secluded region of private life. But he had a judgment sure and sound; a steadiness of mind which never suffered any passion, or even any feeling, to ruffle its calm; a strength of understanding which worked, rather than forced, its way through all obstacles—removing or avoiding rather than overleaping them. If profound sagacity, unshaken steadiness of purpose, the entire subjugation of all the passions which carry havoc through ordinary minds, and oftentimes lay waste the fairest prospects of greatness—nay, the discipline of those feelings which are wont to lull or seduce genius, and to mar and to cloud over

the aspect of virtue herself—joined with, or rather leading to, the most absolute self-denial; the most habitual and exclusive devotion to principle—if these things can constitute a great character, without either quickness of apprehension, or resources of information, or inventive powers, or any brilliant quality that might dazzle the vulgar—then surely Washington was the greatest man that ever lived in the world, uninspired by Divine wisdom, and unsustained by supernatural virtue.

His courage, whether in battle or in council, was as perfect as might be expected from his pure and steady temper of soul. A perfectly just man, with a thoroughly firm resolution never to be misled by others any more than to be by others overawed; never to be seduced, or betrayed, or hurried away by his own weakness or self-delusions any more than by other men's arts; nor ever to be disheartened by the most complicated difficulties any more than to be spoilt in the giddy heights of fortune—such was this great man, great, pre-eminently great, whether we regard him sustaining alone the whole weight of campaigns, all but desperate, or gloriously terminating a just warfare by his resources and his courage—presiding over the jarring elements of his political council, alike deaf to the storm of all extremes, or directing the formation of a new government for a great people, the first time that so vast an experiment had ever been tried by man—or finally retiring from the supreme power to which his virtue had raised him over the nation he had created, and whose destinies he had guided as long as his aid was required—retiring with the veneration of all parties, of all nations, of all mankind, in order that the rights of men might be conserved, and that his example might never be appealed to by vulgar tyrants. This is the consummate glory

of Washington—a triumphant warrior where the most sanguine had a right to despair; a successful ruler in all the difficulties of a course wholly untried, but a warrior whose sword only left its sheath when the first law of our nature commanded it to be drawn, and a ruler who, having tasted of supreme power, gently and unostentatiously desired that the cup might pass from him, nor would suffer more to wet his lips than the most solemn and most sacred duty to his country and his God required.



NELSON.

[BORN 1758. DIED 1805.]

ALISON.

"YET," in the words of Southey, "he cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work was done; nor ought he to be lamented who died so full of honours, and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of the martyr; the most awful that of the martyred patriot; the most splendid that of the hero in the hour of victory; and if the chariot and horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory."

Lord Nelson was the greatest naval officer of this or any other nation, whose achievements have been recorded in history. The energies of an ardent and impetuous mind were in him wholly absorbed in patriotic feeling. Duty to his God, his king, and country, constituted the simple objects to which unrivalled powers and consummate genius were directed. Like all other great commanders, he took the utmost pains to make his officers thoroughly acquainted beforehand with his general plan of operations, but entrusted them with full discretionary powers in carrying them into execution. He possessed the eagle eye which at once discerns the fitting movement, and the capacity for skilful combination which brings every power at his disposal simultaneously and deci-

sively into action. Simple in his desires and enthusiastic in his character, he was alike superior to the love of wealth, the bane of inferior, and envy of others, the frailty of ambitious minds. Devotion to his country was in him blended with a constant sense of religious duty; and amidst all the license of arms, he was distinguished from the first by an early and manly piety. In his later years, when his achievements had marked him out as the great defender of Christianity, he considered himself an instrument in the hands of Providence to combat the infidel spirit of the revolution, and commenced his despatch on the battle of the Nile by ascribing the whole to Almighty God. Too great to be fettered by rules, too original to condescend to imitation, he consulted his own inspiration only in all his mighty deeds, and in every instance left the stamp of native genius on the duties, whether elevated or humble, which he performed. His whole career, from his first entrance into the navy to the battle of Trafalgar, exhibited a pattern of every manly virtue. Bold in conception, cautious in combination, firm in execution, cool in danger, he was the most successful, because the most profound and intrepid of leaders. If a veil could be drawn over the deeds perpetrated at Naples, his public character might be deemed without a fault; but no human being was ever yet perfect, and that alloy of frailty which has descended to all from our first parents, long concealed in him by the intensity of patriotic devotion, was at length revealed by the fascination of female wickedness.

(BY LAMARTINE.)

Amongst the illustrious men who have filled the foremost ranks in national contests, we have always felt most interested and dazzled by heroes of the sea. The immensity, the power, the motion, the terrible attributes of the element on which they combat, seem to elevate them above the standard of humanity. This is not a vain, imaginative delusion, but a just estimate of their glory. The variety and extent of natural and acquired faculties which must of necessity be united in the same individual, to constitute a great naval leader, astonish the mind, and raise the perfect sailor beyond all comparison above ordinary warriors. The latter require only the single firmness which faces fire unmoved—the former must be endowed with the double valour which equally braves death and the fury of the elements. But the self-possession which suffices on shore will hardly be found efficient on the ocean. All the resources of intelligence must be combined with courage in the chief who directs the manœuvre, or the broadside from the quarter-deck of an admiral's vessel, or any other man-of-war. He must be endowed with science to steer her course by the heavenly bodies; unwearied vigilance to preserve his ship from storms and quicksands; skill in handling the sails which regulate the immense machine like a master-key; prompt daring to rush into fire through tempests, to seek one death through another; self-possession which dictates when to strike, or how to parry the decisive blow; devotedness which rises under the certainty of destruction, and sacrifices a ship to save the fleet; the ascendancy of a master-mind which forces all to look for safety in a single voice; decision which acts

with the infallibility of inspiration; obedience which yields up strong conviction to superior authority; discipline which bows to the equality of established laws; a calm aspect with a beating heart to inspire confidence in inferiors; manly grace and dignity in demeanour to preserve, in the close intercourse of a crowded ship, the *prestige* which generals on shore maintain by seclusion and reserve, and which naval commanders must keep up in hearty and close communion; a prudent boldness, assuming the risk of responsibility in sudden emergencies, when a moment or a manœuvre may decide the fate of an empire. Disasters which cannot be foreseen or calculated, dark nights which scatter the squadron, storms which swallow up the vessels, fires which consume them, currents which run them aground, calms which neutralise them, rocks which dash them in pieces—to foresee, provide for, and endure all these contingencies with the stoicism of a mind that fights hand to hand with destiny; a narrow deck, with few witnesses, for the field of battle; a thankless glory, always ready to disappear, which is lost in a moment, and frequently never reaches the ears of your country; a death far distant from all you love; a coffin shrouded in the depths of ocean, or cast overboard as a fragment of shipwreck. This is an epitome of the sailor—a hundred dangers for a single ray of glory—ten heroes concentrated in a single man. Such were the great naval warriors of France, of Spain, of England—such was Nelson, the first and last of those Titans of the sea.

SIR JOHN MOORE.

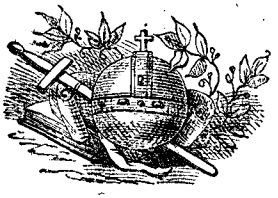
[BORN 1761. DIED 1809.]

NAPIER.

THE tall and graceful person; his dark searching eyes, strongly defined forehead, and singularly expressive mouth, indicated a noble disposition, and a refined understanding; while the lofty sentiments of honour, habitual to the mind, being adorned by a subtle playful wit, gave him in conversation an ascendancy that he always preserved by the decisive vigour of his action. He maintained the right with a vehemence bordering upon fierceness, and every important transaction in which he was engaged increased his reputation for talent, and confirmed his character as a stern enemy to vice, a steadfast friend to merit, a just and faithful servant of his country. The honest loved him, the dishonest feared him; for while he lived, he did not shun, but scorned and spurned the base; and, with characteristic propriety, they spurned at him when he was dead.

A soldier from his earliest youth, Moore thirsted for the honours of his profession; and, feeling that he was worthy to lead a British army, hailed the fortune that placed him at the head of the troops destined for Spain. As the stream of time passed, the inspiring hopes of triumph disappeared; but the austerer glory of suffering remained, and with a firm

heart he accepted that gift of a severe fate. Confiding in the strength of his genius, he disregarded the clamours of presumptuous ignorance, and conducted his long and arduous retreat with sagacity, intelligence, and fortitude: no insult disturbed, no falsehood deceived him, no remonstrance shook his determination; fortune frowned without subduing his constancy; death struck, but the spirit of the man remained unbroken, when his shattered body scarcely afforded it a habitation. Having done all that was just towards others, he remembered what was due to himself; neither the shock of the mortal blow, nor the lingering hours of acute pain which preceded his dissolution, could quell the pride of his gallant heart, or lower the dignified feeling with which, conscious of merit, he at the last moment asserted his right to the gratitude of the country he had served so truly. If glory be a distinction to such a man, Death is not a leveller.



WELLINGTON.

[BORN 1769. DIED 1852.]

HUGH MILLER.

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON was the last, and at least one of the greatest, of that group of great men, whose histories we find specially connected with the French Revolution. He pertained to a type of man so rare, that we can enumerate only two other examples in the great Teutonic family to which he belonged —George Washington and Oliver Cromwell. Of spare and meagre imagination, and of intellect not at all cast in the literary or oratorical mould, they yet excelled their fellows in the possession of a gigantic common sense, rarer, we had almost said, than genius itself, but which in truth constituted genius of a homely and peculiar, but not the less high order, and which better fitted them to be leaders of men, than the more brilliant and versatile genius of a Shakspeare or a Milton would have done. Like the other great men with whose names we associate his, Wellington was remarkable for seeing, in his own especial province, whatever the ablest and shrewdest of his contemporaries could not see. Jeffrey and Brougham were both able men, talkers of the first water, and even as judges and reviewers not beneath the highest average found among men; and yet we have only to take up those earlier numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*, in which

these accomplished judicial critics discussed the Peninsular campaigns, to find how utterly ignorant they both were, and with them all the party which they represented, of that simple but really great idea which formed the basis of Wellington's operations, and which ultimately led him to results so brilliant and successful.

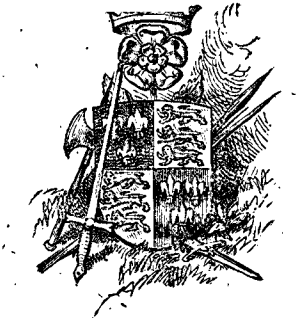
Nor was the mediocre ministry of the day, though they lent him from time to time their dribblets of support, at first most meagrely and unwillingly, until compelled to liberality by his successes, less in the dark regarding it than their opponents. Nor was it the least wonderful that they should have found the case of the Peninsula a peculiarly hard one. Appearances, as all ordinary and even almost all superior observers were able to remark them, seemed sadly against the British. There were 300,000 French soldiers in the Peninsula. The British there at no time amounted to 60,000. They had allies, it is true, in the Portuguese and the Spaniards, but allies on which they could reckon but little; and yet such was the apparently inadequate force with which Wellington had determined to clear the Peninsula. What could the man mean? Was he possessed of the vulgar belief that "one Englishman is a match for five Frenchmen at any time?" No; Wellington was perfectly sober-minded; and with a confidence in the native prowess of the well-disciplined Briton, such as that which Nelson possessed—a confidence that, if opposed man to man, on equal terms of position and weapons, the Englishman would beat the Frenchman, just as a stronger mechanical force bears down a weaker—he was particularly chary of risking his men against overpowering odds. On what, then, was his confidence founded? He saw, better than any one else, the true circumstances of the Peninsula, and the true difficulties

of the French. Finally, he broke the power of the French in Spain in one great battle, repressed and beat back Soult, who had rushed across the Pyrenees to oppose him, and finally terminated the war at Toulouse.

As a statesman, the Duke of Wellington held a considerably lower place than as a warrior. With bodies of men, regarded simply as physical forces, no man could deal more skilfully. With bodies of men, regarded as combinations of faculties rational and intellectual, he frequently failed. He could calculate to a nicety on the power of an armed battalion, but much less nicely on the power of an armed opinion; and all the graver defects of his career we find in this latter department.

There seemed to be but little of the soft green of humanity about the departed warrior. He was, in appearance at least, a hard man, who always did his own duty, and expected from others the first tale of theirs. He was a stern disciplinarian, and visited at times, with what was deemed undue severity, the liberties taken by his soldiers with the property of an allied people; and so he possessed much less of the love of the men who served under him, than not only the weaker but tender-hearted Nelson, but than also the genial and good-humoured Duke of York,—a prince whom no soldier ever trusted as a general, or ever disliked as a man. But never did general possess more thoroughly the confidence of his soldiers,—wherever he led they were prepared to follow. We have been told by an old campaigner, who had fought under him, in one of our Highland regiments, in all the battles of the Peninsula, that, on one occasion in a retreat, the corps to which he belonged had been left far behind in the rear of their fellows, and began to express some anxiety regarding the near proximity of the enemy. "I wish," said

one, "I saw 10,000 of our countrymen beside us." "I wish rather," rejoined another, "that I saw the long nose of the Duke of Wellington." A few minutes after, the duke was actually seen riding past, and from that moment confidence was restored in the regiment. Nor, with all his seeming harshness, was Wellington in any degree a cruel or inhumane man. He was, on the contrary, kind and benevolent.



NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.

[BORN 1769. DIED 1821.]

BROUGHAM.

THIS celebrated man was sprung from a good family in Corsica, and, while yet a boy, fixed the attention and raised the hopes of all his connexions. In early youth his military genius shone forth: he soon gained the summit of his profession. He commanded at twenty-five a military operation of a complicated and difficult nature in Paris. Being selected for superior command by the genius of Carnot, he rapidly led the French armies through a series of victories, till then unexampled, and to which even now his own after-achievements can alone form any parallel for the suddenness, the vehemence, and completeness of the operations.

Nor can it be denied that, when the fortune of war proved adverse, the resources of his mind were only drawn forth in the more ample profusion. After the battle of Asperne he displayed more skill as well as constancy than in all his previous campaigns; and the struggle which he made in France during the dreadful contest that preceded his downfall, is by many regarded as the masterpiece of his military life. Nor let us forget that the grand error of his whole career—the mighty expedition to Moscow—was a political error only. The vast preparations for that campaign; the combinations

by which he collected, and marshalled, and moved this prodigious and varied force like a single corps, or a domestic animal, or a lifeless instrument in his hand, displayed in the highest degree the great genius alike for arrangement and for action with which he was endowed; and the prodigious efforts to regain the ground which the disasters of that campaign rescued from his grasp, were only not successful because no human power could in a month create an army of cavalry, nor a word of command give recruits the discipline of veterans.

But the vaulting ambition of the great conqueror at last overleapt itself. After the most arduous, and, perhaps, triumphant campaign, undertaken with a profusion of military resources unexampled in the annals of war, the ancient capital of the Russian empire was in his hands; yet from the refusal of the enemy to make peace, and the sterility of the vast surrounding country, the conquest was bootless to his purpose. He had collected the mightiest army that ever the world saw; from all parts of the continent he had gathered his forces; every diversity of blood, and complexion, and tongue, and garb, and weapon shone along his line; the resources of the whole provinces moved through the kingdoms which his arms held in awe; the artillery of whole citadels traversed the fields; the cattle on a thousand hills were made the food of the myriads whom he poured into the plains of Eastern Europe, where blood flowed in rivers, and the earth was whitened by men's bones; but his gigantic enterprise, uniformly successful, was found to have no object, when it had no longer an enemy to overcome, and the victor in vain sued to the vanquished for peace. The conflagration of Moscow in one night began his discomfiture, which the frost of another night completed. Upon

the pomp and circumstance of unnumbered warriors—their cavalry, their guns, their magazines, their equipage—descended slowly, flake by flake, the snow of a northern night. The hopes of Napoleon were blighted, the retreat of his armament was cut off, and his doom sealed, far more irreversibly than if the conqueror of a hundred fields had been overthrown in battle, and made captive with half his force.

With great qualities of the will, the highest courage, the most easy formation of his resolutions, the most steadfast adherence to his purpose, the entire devotion of all his energies to his object—and with the equally shining faculties of the understanding by which that firm will worked—the clearest and quickest apprehension, the power of intense application, the capacity of complete abstraction from all interrupting ideas,—the complete and most instantaneous circumspection of all difficulties, whether on one side, or even providentially seen in prospect,—the intuitive knowledge of men, and the power of mind and of tongue to mould their will to his purpose—with these qualities, which form the character held greatest by vulgar minds, the panegyric of Napoleon must close. HE WAS A CONQUEROR. HE WAS A TYRANT.

Statesmen and Orators.

CICERO.

[BORN B.C. 106. DIED B.C. 43.]

PROFESSOR SPALDING.

THIS is by far the first literary name, not only of his own age, but of the ancient Roman world. In its rare union of warmth, practical sense, and astonishing versatility, his genius has scarcely any parallel, and his influence on the philosophical knowledge and opinions of modern Europe has been incalculable. The voluminous works of this great man, composed during the leisure hours of a life involved in the vortex of political contention, contain a wonderful variety of subjects. His histories in Greek prose and Latin rhyme are lost; and the small specimens of his verses that survive, leave no room for regret that we do not possess more. His important works are his correspondence, his orations, his treatises on rhetoric, and his philosophical dissertations. His philosophical works are those by which he has most benefited his

own and subsequent ages. They nearly equal in bulk the collection of his speeches, and traverse a wide field of speculation. In no department of research was Cicero, in the strict sense of the term, a discoverer, although his writings contain many observations of a highly original cast. His chief merit, therefore, consists in having made himself extensively master of the Greek philosophy, and embodied its most practical branches in a form attractively eloquent, equally divested of metaphysical abstruseness and of rhetorical exaggeration. His writings, indeed, form only the portico to the temple of wisdom; but the singular beauty of the approach invites the student, and its ease of access secures his progress to the sanctuary beyond.

He was the first Roman, perhaps the only man of his time, who studied Aristotle's works, of which the manuscript lay neglected in Sylla's library; but the sects whose principles he most fully elucidated were the Academics and the Stoics; and, throwing most of his dissertation into the form of dialogues, he expounds the tenets, first of the one sect and then of the other. Some of his philosophical works have perished. Petrarch, who possessed the only known manuscript of the "Treatise on Glory," lent it to a friend, by whom it was either sold or lost, and the recently discovered essay, "De Republica," has disappointed the hopes of scholars. His other tract on political philosophy, entitled "De Legibus," is inferior in interest to his ethical discussions, which, with the theological works, were written after the overthrow of the republic by Cæsar had removed the author from active life. The books "De Finibus" expressed the ethical doctrines of the three sects of Epicureans, Stoics, and Academics. The essay "De Officiis," one of his latest philosophical dissertations, inculcates the Stoical

principles of moral duty, illustrating them with the finest skill and liveliness; and the "Tusculan Questions," the most delightful of all his speculative writings, discuss, in the form of dialogues held at his villa near Tusculum, some of the most important topics, religious and moral, the duty of subduing the fear of death, of enduring pain and sorrow with courage, of overcoming passion, and of believing in the all-sufficiency of virtue to secure genuine happiness.



LORENZO DE MEDICI.

[BORN 1448. DIED 1492.]

HALLAM.

THE influence of Lorenzo de Medici extended over literature from 1470 to his death in 1492. Nor was mere philology the sole or the leading pursuit to which so truly noble a mind accorded its encouragement. He sought in ancient learning something more elevated than the narrow though necessary researches of criticism. In a villa overhanging the towers of Florence, on the steep slope of that lofty hill, crowned by the mother city, the ancient Fiesole, in gardens which Tully might have envied, with Ficino, Landino, and Politian at his side, he delighted his hours of leisure with the beautiful visions of Platonic philosophy, for which the summer stillness of an Italian sky appears the most congenial accompaniment. Never could the sympathies of the soul with outward nature be more finely touched, never could more striking suggestions be presented to the philosopher and the statesman. Florence lay beneath them, not with all the magnificence that the latter Medici had given her, but, thanks to the piety of former times, presenting almost as varied an outline to the sky. One man, the wonder of Cosmo's age, Brunelleschi, had crowned the beautiful city with the vast dome of its cathedral, a structure unthought of in Italy before, and rarely since surpassed. It

seemed, amidst clustering towers of inferior churches, an emblem of the Catholic hierarchy, under its supreme head; like Rome itself, imposing, unbroken, unchangeable, radiating with equal expansion to every part of the earth, and directing its convergent curves to heaven. Round this were numbered, at unequal heights, the Baptistery with its gates, as Michael Angelo called them, worthy of Paradise; the full and richly-decorated belfry of Giotto, the Church of the Carmine, with the frescoes of Masaccio; those of Santa Maria Novella, in the language of the same great man, beautiful as a bride of Santa Croce, second only in magnificence to the Cathedral of St Mark; and of San Spirito, another great monument of the genius of Brunelleschi; the numerous convents that rose within the walls of Florence, or were scattered immediately about them. From these the eye might turn to the trophies of a republican government, that was rapidly giving way before the citizen-prince who now surveyed them.

The prospect, from an elevation, of a great city in its silence, is one of the most impressive, as well as beautiful, we ever behold. But far more must it have brought home thoughts of seriousness to the mind of one who, by the force of events, and the general condition of his family,—and his own was involved in the dangerous necessity of governing without the right, and, as far as might be, without the semblance of power,—one who knew the vindictive and unscrupulous hostility which, at home and abroad, he had to encounter. If thoughts like these could bring a cloud over the brow of Lorenzo unfit for the object he sought in that retreat, he might restore its serenity by other scenes which his garden commanded. Mountains, bright with various hues, and clothed with wood, bounded the horizon, and on

most sides at no great distance, but embosomed in these were other villas and domains of his own; while the level country bore witness to the agricultural improvements, the classic diversion of a statesman's cares. The same curious spirit that led him to fill his garden at Careggi with exotic flowers of the East, the first instance of a botanical collection in Europe, had introduced a new animal from the same regions. Herds of buffaloes, since naturalised in Italy, whose dingy hide, bent neck, curved horns, and lowering aspect, contrasted with the greyish hue and full mild eye of the Tuscan oxen, pastured in the valley down which the yellow Arno steals silently through its long reaches to the sea.

MACHIAVELLI.

[BORN 1469. DIED 1527.]

SISMONDI.

THE influence to which Machiavelli owed his elevation in the Florentine republic was that of the free party which contested the power of the Medici, and at that time held them in exile. When the latter were recalled in 1512, he was deprived of all his employs and banished. He then entered into a conspiracy against the usurpers, which was discovered, and he was put to the torture. He has not in any of his writings testified his resentment of the cruel treatment he experienced. He seems to have concealed it at the bottom of his heart; but we easily perceive that torture had not increased his love of princes, and that he took a pleasure in painting them as he had seen them in a work in which he feigned to instruct them. It was, in fact, after having lost his employs that he wrote on history and politics with that profound knowledge of the human heart which he had acquired in public life, and with the habit of unweaving in all its intricacies the political perfidies which then prevailed in Italy. He dedicated his treatise of "The Prince," not to Lorenzo the Magnificent, as Bouterwek, by a strange anachronism has stated, but to Lorenzo Duke of Urbino, the proud usurper of the liberties of Florence, and of the estates of his benefactor, the former

Duke of Urbino, of the house of Rovere. Lorenzo thought himself profound when he was crafty, and energetic when he was cruel; and Machiavelli, in showing in his treatise of "The Prince" how an able usurper, who is not restrained by any moral principle, may consolidate his power, gave to the duke instructions conformable to his taste. The true object, however, of Machiavelli, could not be to secure on his throne a tyrant whom he hated, and against whom he had conspired. Nor is it probable that he only proposed to himself to expose to the people the maxims of tyranny in order to render them odious, for an universal experience had at that time made them known throughout all Italy; and that diabolical policy which Machiavelli reduced to a system was in the sixteenth century that of all the states. There is in his manner of treating his subject a general feeling of bitterness against mankind, and a contempt of the human race, which induces him to address it in language adapted to its despicable and depraved condition. He applies himself to the interests and selfish calculations of mankind, since they do not deserve an appeal to their enthusiasm and moral sense. He establishes principles in theory which he knows his readers will reduce to practice, and he exhibits the play of the human passions with an energy and clearness which require no ornament.

"The Prince" of Machiavelli is the best known of his political works, but it is neither the most profound nor most considerable. His three books of Discourses on the first Decade of Livy, in which he investigates the first causes of the power of the Romans, and the obstacles which have impeded other nations in a similar career, discover an extensive knowledge, a great perspicacity in judging of men, and a powerful talent of mind in abstracting and generalising ideas.

Machiavelli might have rendered himself illustrious as a comic writer, if he had not preferred political fame. He has left three comedies which, by the novelty of the plot, by the strength and vivacity of the dialogues, and by their admirable delineation of character, are far superior to all that Italy had then, or has, perhaps, since produced. His tale of "Belphagor or the Devil," who takes refuge in hell to avoid a scold, has been translated into all languages, and remodelled in French by La Fontaine. His poems are more remarkable for vigour of thought than for harmony of style or grace of expression. Some are composed of historical facts versified, and others of satirical or burlesque fragments. But the pleasantries of the author are generally mingled with gall; and when he indulges in humour it is always in derision of the human race.



CARDINAL WOLSEY

[BORN 1471. DIED 1530.]

TYTLER.

THIS extraordinary man was of low origin; nor does there appear any reasonable ground for questioning the common story, sanctioned by the high authority of Lord Herbert, that his father exercised the trade of a butcher at Ipswich. The old man's will, which proves him to have been a citizen of considerable wealth, has been quoted against this opinion, but there is nothing inconsistent or improbable in a butcher being a wealthy burgess. Educated for the church, he distinguished himself by early attainments in such knowledge as Oxford could then communicate; his precocity of talent procured him the name of the boy-bachelor; and for some time after this he taught the grammar school adjoining to Magdalen College. But his talents for business, his quick discernment of the weak points of human character, and the unscrupulous readiness with which he accommodated himself to those he desired to please, soon pushed him into notice; and such was his boundless ambition, that his first preferments, which would have satisfied the desires of most men, served only as the steps to such an accumulation of power, dignity, and grandeur as had never before this time been concentrated in any subject. Under Henry VII., the execution of a

difficult negotiation at the imperial court with unusual success and expedition had recommended him to the royal notice; but although he rewarded him with unwonted liberality, this cautious monarch was little worked upon by the address or flattery of others, and the full development of Wolsey's powers was reserved for the reign of his son. It was then that Fox, the Bishop of Winchester, who dreaded, it is said, the preponderating influence of Surrey in the council, introduced him, as a kind of balance against it, to the notice of the young monarch; and such was the happy use which he made of his opportunities, that, at the period of the king's campaign in France, we find him enjoying unbounded confidence, and possessing the highest political influence. From this period preferments flowed in upon him with extraordinary rapidity, and it appeared as if Henry had determined that the man whom he honoured with special confidence should be the focus in which every ray of the royal favour should meet with intense brightness. He was made successively King's Almoner, Bishop of Tournay, Bishop of Lincoln, Cardinal-Legate, Archbishop of York, and Lord High Chancellor.

He had carefully studied the character of the king; he flattered his weaknesses, released him from the irksome weight of government; and whilst he originated, conducted, and concluded all, he had the rare address to leave his royal master business enough to conciliate his vanity, and persuade him that he had guided whilst he only followed the current of affairs. Deeply selfish, and looking to his own ends, whilst he pretended a zeal for the public good, he acted upon no great plan, squandering the wealth and exhausting the military resources of the country in vague projects, generally dictated by the policy of the Vatican,

which brought neither glory nor profit, though they might terminate in some accession of dignity to himself. Haughty, imperious, and magnificent to an excess which had never before been seen in England,—with a memory which seldom forgot an injury, and a spirit of revenge which slept only to exact a deeper interest,—so sensual and luxurious that he seems only to have escaped excessive profligacy by excessive business,—insolent in prosperity, and abject in misfortune,—it is difficult to account for the extraordinary partiality of Henry for one whose moral and intellectual qualities seem to challenge so little regard. It is probable that Wolsey's secret lay in persuading the king that his wealth, power, and splendour were merely the emanations from the sun of the royal favour; that his glory was a reflection from his sovereign; and that a single blast of his displeasure might in a few minutes wither the goodly boughs of that cedar, beneath which monarchs were content to take shelter. Such was indeed the truth, as the melancholy conclusion of his history very fully demonstrated; for none who had shot up to so grand and predominant a power in so brief a space of time, ever descended from his high honours by a more rapid course of calamity.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

[BORN 1480. DIED 1535.]

TYTLER.

SIR THOMAS MORE had distinguished himself in the House of Commons at an early period of life, by his resistance to an exorbitant subsidy which was demanded by Henry VII.; and, in consequence of this spirited conduct, had fallen under the displeasure of that sovereign. His eminent abilities and extensive practice as a lawyer rendered him, however, independent of royal patronage. His natural parts were of a high order, and his genius, far before his age, led him to the discovery of many leading principles upon the subjects of reform and toleration, which then began to agitate the minds of men in various parts of Europe; but, though an original thinker, he shrunk from the practical enforcement of his opinions. A finished classical scholar—an enthusiastic student in the languages of ancient Greece and Rome, in which he wrote with admirable purity and ease—More, like Erasmus, of whom he was the familiar companion, esteemed above all things that tranquillity which is the soul of literary enjoyment. It was on this account that he long opposed every attempt to bring him into public life, preferring his professional celebrity, and the enjoyment of domestic ease, to the uncertain and irksome splendour of a court. The friend of all the most distin-

guished scholars in his own country, and known by his various and amusing writings to the men of highest genius abroad, he fully appreciated the comforts of his lot, and dreaded any summons which threatened to break the seclusion of so sweet and independent an existence. In addition to all this, and to crown a character which, till irritated into intolerance by the progress of what he deemed heretical opinions, was uniformly amiable and gentle, he was a man of profound piety and exemplary virtue. Educated in the rigid school of Colet, whom he had chosen as his spiritual guide, his devotional habits were tinctured with the severe asceticism which belonged to a Catholic age. But his austerities and inflictions centred in himself; to others he was indulgent and humane; whilst the sweetness of his temper, his ready forgiveness of injuries, his wide and unostentatious charities, and the courage with which he was ever ready to peril his life for his faith, evinced that his was the genuine fasting and holy penance of the heart. After having long resisted every entreaty, this eminent man was at last, not introduced, but compelled into public life.

His character undoubtedly degenerated in some small degree in his latter days. It was strange that, as the Reformation proceeded, his mind became first stationary, and then disposed to retrograde. In his early career in life, none seemed to have less hesitation in attacking the abuses of the Roman Church. Like Erasmus, he lashed the vices and impositions of the friars, till his satire almost bordered on profanity. But he drew a marked distinction between the arts of a system and the effort to destroy it, or to question the truth of the principles upon which it was founded. When the storm began to howl around him, and the pillars of these ancient and venerable institutions in which he had been

educated were seen tottering under the ground-swell of the Reformation, he evidently dreaded the consequences of a convulsion of which he had himself been an unconscious instrument, though he had not been able to anticipate the conclusion. Hence the early boldness of his youth, and the superstitious timidity of his latter days. It is more difficult to find an apology for his intolerance, his practical and even personal severities, to those he esteemed heretics. The object which he wished to accomplish must have been to impose silence, and not to create conviction; for he had early declared that no man could be constrained into a particular belief. And here, before we pronounce with too much severity upon this unquestionable blot on his amiable character, let it be remembered that toleration, though essentially a Christian principle, was in that age a stranger alike to the creed of Protestants and Catholics, and that persecution for religious opinion did not rest only in the proceedings of such men as Bonner and Gardiner, but polluted also the placid, unbiassed, and charitable intellect of Cranmer.

THOMAS CROMWELL.

[BORN 1490. DIED 1540.]

FROUDE.

ON the 28th of July, 1540, the most despotic minister who had ever governed England passed from the tower to the scaffold. . . . Thus perished a statesman whose character will for ever remain a problem, suffering needlessly in his death by the awkwardness of the executioner [a ragged and butcherly miser]. For eight years his influence had been supreme with the king—supreme in parliament—supreme in convocation; the nation, in the ferment of a revolution, was absolutely confronted by him; and he has left the print of his individual genius stamped indelibly, while the metal was at white heat, into the constitution of the country. Wave after wave has rolled over his work. Romanism flowed back over it under Mary. Puritanism, under another even grander Cromwell, overwhelmed it. But Romanism ebbed again, and Puritanism is dead, and the polity of the Church of England remains as it was left by its creator.

And not in the Church only, but in all departments of the public service, Cromwell was the sovereign guide. In the Foreign Office, in the Home Office, in Star Chamber and at Council Table, in Dock-Yard and Law Court, Cromwell's

intellect presided—Cromwell's hand executed. His gigantic correspondence remains to witness for his varied energy. Whether it was an ambassador or a commissioner of sewers, a warden of a company or a tradesman who was injured by the guild, a bishop or a heretic, a justice of the peace or a serf crying for emancipation, Cromwell was the universal authority to whom all officials looked for instruction, and all sufferers looked for redress. Hated by all those who had grown old in an earlier system—by the wealthy, whose interests were touched by the reforms—by the superstitious, whose prejudices he wounded—he was the defender of the weak, the defender of the poor, defender of "the fatherless and forsaken;" and for his work the long maintenance of it has borne witness that it was good, that he did the thing which England's true interests required to be done.

Of the manner in which that work was done it is less easy to speak. Fierce laws fiercely executed—an unflinching resolution which neither danger could daunt nor saintly virtue move to mercy—a long list of solemn tragedies weigh upon his memory. He had taken upon himself a task beyond the ordinary strength of man. His difficulties could be overcome only by inflexible persistence in the course which he had marked out for himself and for the state, and he supported his weakness by a determination which imitated the unbended fixity of a law of nature. He pursued an object, the excellence of which, as his mind saw it, transcended all other considerations,—the freedom of England, and the destruction of idolatry; and those who from any motive, noble or base, pious or impious, crossed his path, he crushed, and passed on over their bodies.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

[BORN 1552. DIED 1618].

TYTLER.

IF required to describe in a few words the most prominent features in the mind of this man, I would say they were his universality and originality—a warrior both by sea and land—a statesman, a navigator, and discoverer of new countries—an accomplished courtier, a scholar, and eloquent writer—a sweet and true poet, and a munificent patron of letters: there is scarcely one of the aspects in which we view him where he does not shine with a remarkable brightness. In some of the pursuits, indeed, in which he attained distinction, he has been excelled by other eminent men of his time; but where do we find such a combination as in Raleigh? They were satisfied with the glory of being great in one department; he aimed at almost universal excellence. They wisely concentrated their efforts on the cultivation of a single insulated branch of human knowledge; his discursive and vigorous mind was not contented till it had made an inroad and achieved a triumph in them all; and it may be certainly affirmed that, upon every thing which he undertook, he has left that stamp of power and originality which belongs to the man of genius.

As to his faults there was nothing little in the character of Raleigh. His errors and his weaknesses stand out as pro

minently as the higher qualities of his mind. It will be found, indeed, that in most cases they arose out of them. His credulity was a weed thrown out by the strength and ardour of his imagination; his love of riches, which has been called his avarice, was not so much the sordid lust of gain, for he was no hoarder, as a shoot from that old buccaneering spirit which he had acquired in the school of Drake and Hawkins. His fancy had caught fire at first in the perusal of the histories of Cortes and Pizarro. His royal mistress delighted to see the pearl-laden and golden carracks of the Spaniard brought into her ports; and if Raleigh loved the Spanish plunder, he loved still more the danger and the enterprise with which it was connected. His ambition was restless in its ends, and sometimes ruinous in its results; but it was not a selfish ambition—it arose out of his love for his country, his zeal for its pre-eminence and glory.

As to the charge of his being a deist, an atheist, or a freethinker,—for it has been advanced under all these forms of speech,—it in all probability arose out of a youthful fault, exaggerated or misconceived. In his early days of vanity and ambition, Raleigh was a bold and reckless disputant on most subjects, not excluding religion, and he had sometimes the weakness to court discussion rather for the purposes of display than the discovery of truth. He laughed at the boasted infallibility of human reason, and in his ingenious little essay, entitled the "Sceptic," demonstrated the uncertainty of those deductions which are based on a limited experience and superficial observation. He professed an early contempt for the dogmatism of the Aristotelian philosophy; he regarded with little respect the system of scholastic theology; and out of these materials the noted Jesuit, Father Parsons, manufactured a charge of atheism, whilst Hume,

Carte, and some more modern writers, have not scrupled to pronounce him a deist or freethinker. How wide both aspersions are from the truth has been already shown. The foibles of his youth passed away; the pride of intellect, the vanity of display, was subdued by affliction; and his profound and contemplative mind, instructed by the heavenly lesson, was brought to rest on that only stay for the broken and wounded spirit, the blessed hopes and promises of revelation.



HAMPDEN.

[BORN 1594. DIED 1643.]

MACAULAY.

THE celebrated Puritan leader is an almost solitary instance of a great man who neither sought nor shunned greatness, who found glory only because glory lay in the plain cause of duty. During more than forty years he was known to his country neighbours as a gentleman of cultivated mind, of high principles, of polished address, happy in his family, and active in the discharge of his local duties; and to political men, as an honest, industrious, and sensible member of Parliament,—not eager to display his talents, staunch to his party, and attentive to the interests of his constituents. A great and terrible crisis came. A direct attack was made by an arbitrary government on a sacred right of Englishmen, on a right which was the chief security for all their other rights. The nation looked round for a defender. Calmly and unostentatiously the plain Buckinghamshire esquire placed himself at the head of his countrymen, and right before the face and across the path of tyranny. The times grew darker and more troubled; public service, perilous, arduous, delicate, was required; and to every service the intellect and courage of this wonderful man were found fully equal. He became a debater of the first order, a most dexterous manager of the

House of Commons, a negotiator, a soldier. He governed a fierce and turbulent assembly, abounding in able men, as easily as he had governed his own family. He showed himself as competent to direct a campaign, as to conduct the business of the petty sessions.

We can scarcely express the admiration we feel for a mind so great, and, at same time, so healthful and so well proportioned, so willingly contracting itself to the humblest duties, so easily expanding itself to the highest, so contented in repose, so powerful in action. Almost every part of this virtuous and blameless life, which is not hidden from us in modest privacy, is a precious and splendid portion of our national history. Had the private conduct of Hampden afforded the slightest pretence for censure, he would have been assailed by the same blind malevolence which, in defiance of the clearest proofs, still continues to call Sir John Eliot an assassin. Had there been even any weak part in the character of Hampden, had his manner been in any respect open to ridicule, we may be sure that no mercy would have been shown to him by the writers of Charles's faction. Those writers have carefully preserved every little circumstance which could tend to make their opponents odious or contemptible. They have made themselves merry with the cant of injudicious zealots. They have told us that Pym broke down in a speech, that Ireton had his nose pulled by Hollis, that the Earl of Northumberland cudgelled Henry Martyn, that St John's manners were sullen, that Vane had an ugly face, that Cromwell had a red nose. But neither the artful Clarendon, nor the scurrilous Denham could venture to throw the slightest imputation on the morals or the manners of Hampden. What was the opinion entertained respecting him by Baxter? That eminent person—

eminent not only for his piety and his fervid devotional eloquence, but for his moderation, his knowledge of political affairs, and his skill in judging of character—declared, in "The Saint's Rest," that one of the pleasures he hoped to enjoy in heaven was the society of Hampden.



VISCOUNT FALKLAND.

[BORN 1610. DIED 1643.]

CLARENDON.

IF the celebrating the memory of eminent and extraordinary persons, and transmitting their great virtues for the imitation of posterity, be one of the principal ends and duties of history, it will not be thought impertinent in this place to remember a loss which no time will suffer to be forgotten, and no succession of good fortune could repair. In this unhappy battle (Newbery, 1643) was slain the Lord Viscount Falkland, a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity.'

He was a great cherisher of wit, and fancy, and good parts in any man; and if he found them clouded with poverty and want, a most liberal and bountiful patron towards them even above his fortune, of which, in those administrations, he was such a dispenser as, if he had been trusted with it for such uses, and if there had been the least of vice in his expense, he might have been thought too pro-

digal. He was constant and pertinacious in whatsoever he resolved to do, and not to be wearied by any pains that were necessary to that end. And therefore, having once resolved not to see London, which he loved above all places, till he had perfectly learned the Greek tongue, he went to his own house in the country and pursued it with that indefatigable industry, that it will not be believed in how short a time he was master of it, and accurately read all the Greek historians.

In this time, his house being within little more than ten miles of Oxford, he contracted familiarity and friendship with the most polite and accurate men of that university, who found such an immenseness of wit and such a solidity of judgment in him,—so infinite a fancy, bound in him by a most logical ratiocination, such a vast knowledge that he was not ignorant of anything, yet such an excessive humility as if he had known nothing,—that they frequently resorted to and dwelt with him as in a college situated in a purer air; so that his house was a university in a less volume, whither they came, not so much for repose as study, and to examine and refine those grosser propositions which laziness and consent made current in vulgar conversation.



WILLIAM PITT, EARL OF CHATHAM.

[BORN 1708. DIED 1778.]

MACAULAY.

UNDOUBTEDLY a great man. But his was not a complete and well-proportioned greatness. The public life of Hampden or of Somers resembles a regular drama, which can be criticised as a whole, and every scene of which is to be viewed in connection with the main action. The public life of Pitt, on the other hand, is a rude though striking piece—a piece abounding in incongruities—a piece without any unity of plan, but redeemed by some noble passages, the effect of which is increased by the tameness or extravagance of what precedes and of what follows. His opinions were unfixed: His conduct, at some of the most important conjunctures of his life, was evidently determined by pride and resentment. He had one fault which, of all human faults, is most rarely found in company with true greatness. He was extremely affected. He was an almost solitary instance of a man of real genius, and of a brave, lofty, and commanding spirit, without simplicity of character. He was an actor in the closet, an actor at Council, an actor in Parliament, and even in private society he could not lay aside his theatrical tones and attitudes. We know that one of the most distinguished of his partisans often complained that he could never obtain admittance to Lord

Chatham's room till everything was ready for the representation, till the dresses and properties were all correctly disposed, till the light was thrown, with Rembrandt-like effect, on the head of the illustrious performer, till the flannels had been arranged with the air of a Grecian drapery, and the crutch placed as gracefully as that of Belisarius or Lear.

Yet, with all his faults and affectations, Pitt had in an extraordinary degree many of the elements of greatness. He had genius, strong passions, quick sensibility, and vehement enthusiasm for the grand and the beautiful. There was something about him which ennobled tergiversation itself. He often went wrong, very wrong. But, to quote the language of Wordsworth—

> "He still retained,
> 'Mid such abasement, what he had received
> From nature, an intense and glowing mind."

In an age of low and dirty prostitution, in the age of Dodington and Sandys, it was something to have a man who might perhaps, under strong excitement, have been tempted to ruin his country, but who never would have stooped to pilfer from her; a man whose errors arose, not from a sordid desire of gain, but from a fierce thirst for power, for glory, and for vengeance. History owes to him this attestation: that at a time when anything short of direct embezzlement of the public money was considered as quite fair in public men, he showed the most scrupulous disinterestedness; that at a time when it seems to have been taken for granted that government could be upheld only by the basest and immoral arts, he appealed to the better and nobler parts of human nature; that he made a brave and splendid attempt to do by means of public opinion what no other statesman of his day thought it possible to do, except by means of corruption; that he

looked for support not, like the Pelhams, to a strong aristocratical connection, not, like Bute, to the personal favour of the sovereign, but to the middle class of Englishmen; that he inspired that class with a firm confidence in his integrity and ability; that, backed by them, he forced an unwilling court and an unwilling oligarchy to admit him to an ample share of power; and that he used his power in such a manner as clearly proved him to have sought it, not for the sake of profit or patronage, but from a wish to establish for himself a great and durable reputation, by means of eminent services rendered to the state.





BURKE.

[BORN 1729. DIED 1797.]

ALISON.

EDMUND BURKE, the son of a respectable attorney, was born in Arran Quay, Dublin, in 1730. His great powers soon began to develop themselves. They consisted at first not so much in brilliancy as steadiness of application, facility of comprehension, and strength of memory. The same characteristics distinguished his early writings and speeches, and it was not till late in life that his imagination shone forth with such lustre,—a peculiarity common to him with Milton, Shakespeare, Bacon, and many others of the greatest poets and orators that ever existed. It is easily explained, if we reflect that a quick and fervent mind readily fans a flame from a few perishable materials, but a great one requires mighty and durable elements to warm it into a glow: "*Materia alitur—motibus excitatur et urendo lucescit.*"

His studies early in life, like those of Gibbon and Johnson, were more varied than systematic, multifarious than profound; a system practised in Scotland and Ireland more than in England, but which, looking to the results in these three great men, would seem not to be the worst way of enlarging and strengthening the human mind. He went

through college respectably, but with no extraordinary distinction; reading incessantly, but often poems and novels rather than the works of the academic curriculum; dwelling much on the sublime passages of Shakespeare, Milton, and Young, and not unfrequently essaying his own powers in their career. After arriving in London in 1750, to prosecute his legal studies, he found them wholly distasteful to his diffusive genius, and, possessing an adequate independence, quitted the law for the more attractive paths of literature. He soon after published his essay on "The Sublime and Beautiful," and in 1758 began to write the historical part of the "Annual Register," which he superintended for many years. Little of the fire of the orator, however, or the depth of the philosopher, is to be found in these compositions; he was then only collecting the materials on which the immortal superstructure of his fame was afterwards to be reared. In 1765, he was, from the reputation he had acquired as a writer, appointed private secretary to Lord Rockingham, and soon after entered Parliament.

Mr Burke had long combated in the ranks of the opposition with Mr Fox, and the closest private friendship had cemented their political alliance; but on the breaking out of the French Revolution, they embraced different views. Mr Fox warmly applauded its principles, and declared in the House of Commons that "the new constitution of France was the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any age or country." Mr Burke, on the other hand, gifted with greater political sagacity and foresight, early exerted his talents to oppose the levelling principles which that convulsion had introduced; and his work on the French Revolution produced perhaps a greater impression

on the public mind than any which had yet appeared in the world. It abounds in eloquent passages, profound wisdom, and discriminating talent; but vast as its influence and unbounded as its reputation were when it first appeared, its value was not fully understood till the progress of events had demonstrated the justice of its principles. Their division on this vital question for ever alienated these illustrious men from each other, and drew tears from both in the House of Commons,—an emblem of the effects of this heart-stirring event upon the charities of private life, of the variance which it introduced into the bosom of families, and between friendships which "had stood the strain of a whole lifetime."

"It is perhaps indiscretion," said Burke, in the great debate, "at any period, but especially at my advanced years, to provoke enemies, or give friends an occasion for desertion; but if a firm and steady adherence to the British constitution should place me in such a dilemma, I will risk all, and with my last words exclaim, 'Fly from the French constitution.'" "There is no loss of friends," said Mr Fox. "Yes," said Mr Burke, "there is a loss of friends; I know the price of my conduct; I have done my duty at the price of him I love. Our friendship is at end. With my last breath I will earnestly entreat the two right honourable gentlemen who are the great rivals in this House, whether they hereafter move in the political hemisphere as two flaming meteors, or walk together like brethren hand in hand to preserve and cherish the British constitution, to guard it against innovation, and save it from the dangers of theoretic alterations. It belongs to the infinite and unspeakable Power, the Deity, who with His arm hurls a comet, like a projectile, out of its course, and enables it to endure the sun's heat and the pitchy darkness of the chilly night, to aim at the formation of infinite perfec-

tion; to us poor, weak, incapable mortals there is no safe rule of conduct but experience." Mr Fox rose to reply, but tears at first choked his utterance, and they continued to roll down his cheeks even for some time after he had begun his speech.



WARREN HASTINGS.

[BORN 1733. DIED 1818.]

MACAULAY.

WHEN Hastings had passed many years in retirement, and had long outlived the common age of men, he again became for a short time an object of general attention. In 1813 the charter of the East Indian Company was renewed, and much discussion of Indian affairs took place in Parliament. It was determined to examine witnesses at the bar of the House of Commons, and Hastings was ordered to attend. He had appeared at that bar once before — it was when he read his answer to the charges which Burke had laid on the table. Since that time, twenty-seven years had elapsed; public feeling had undergone a complete change; the nation had now forgotten his faults, and remembered only his services. The re-appearance, too, of a man who had been among the most distinguished of a generation that had passed away, who now belonged to history, and who seemed to have risen from the dead, could not but produce a solemn and pathetic effect. The Commons received him with acclamations, ordered a chair to be set for him, and when he retired, rose und uncovered.

These marks of public esteem were soon followed by marks of royal favour. He lived about four years longer, in

the enjoyment of good spirits, of faculties not impaired to any painful or degrading extent, and of health such as is rarely enjoyed by those who attain such an age. At length, on 22d August 1818, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, he met death with the same tranquil and decorous fortitude which he had opposed to all the trials of his various and eventful life. With all his faults, and they were neither few nor small, only one cemetery was worthy to contain his remains. In that temple of silence and reconciliation, where the enmities of twenty generations lie buried,—in the great Abbey which has during many ages afforded a quiet resting-place to those whose minds and bodies have been shattered by the contentions of the great Hall,—the dust of the illustrious accused should have mingled with the dust of the illustrious accusers. This was not to be yet. The place of interment was not ill chosen. Behind the chancel of the parish church of Daylesford, in earth which already held the bones of many chiefs of the house of Hastings, was laid the coffin of the greatest man who has ever borne that ancient and widely-extended name. On that very spot, probably, fourscore years before, the little Warren, meanly clad and scantily fed, had played with the children of ploughmen. Even then his young mind had revolved plans which might be called romantic. Yet, however romantic, it is not likely that they had been so strange as the truth. Not only had the poor orphan retrieved the fallen fortunes of his line,—not only had he repurchased the old lands and rebuilt the old dwelling,—he had preserved and extended an empire—he had founded a polity—he had administered a government and war with more than the capacity of Richelieu—he had patronised learning with the judicious liberality of Cosmo—he had been attacked by the most formidable com-

bination of enemies that ever sought the destruction of a single victim, and over that combination, after a struggle of ten years, he had triumphed. He had at length gone down to his grave in the fulness of age, in peace after so many troubles, in honour after so much obloquy.

CHARLES FOX.

[BORN 1749. DIED 1806.]

ALISON.

FEW men during life have led a more brilliant career than Charles Fox, and none were ever the object of more affectionate love and admiration from a numerous and enthusiastic body of friends. Their attachment approached to idolatry. All his failings, and he had many, were forgotten in the generous warmth of his feelings, and the enthusiastic temper of his heart. "The simplicity," says Mackintosh, "of his character communicated confidence, the gentleness of his manners inspired friendship." "I admired," says Gibbon, "the powers of a superior man, as they were blended in his attractive character with the simplicity of a child. No human being was ever more free from any taint of malignity, vanity, or falsehood." Nothing can more strongly mark the deep impression made by this part of Mr Fox's character than the words of Burke, pronounced six months after all intercourse between them ceased: "To be sure, he was a man made to be beloved."

A man of pleasure, in every sense of the word; dissipated and irregular in private life; having ruined his private fortune at the gaming-table, and often emerging from such haunts of vice to make his greatest appearance in Parliament; yet he never rose without, by the elevation of his

sentiments and the energy of his language, exciting the admiration, not only of his partisans but of his opponents. The station which he occupied in the British Parliament was not that merely of a leader of a powerful and able party. He was at the head of the friends of freedom of the human race. To his words the ardent and enthusiastic everywhere turned, as to those of the gifted spirit intrusted with their cause. To his support the oppressed and destitute universally looked, as their last and best refuge in periods of disaster. "When he pleaded," says Chateaubriand, "the cause of humanity, he reigned, he triumphed. Ever on the side of suffering, his eloquence acquired additional power from his gratuitous exertions on behalf of the unfortunate. He crept even into the coldest heart. A sensible alteration in the line of the orator discovered the man. In vain the stranger tried to resist the impression made upon him; he turned aside and wept."

Mr Fox was the greatest debater that the English Parliament ever produced. He has been styled by the most competent judge [Sir James Mackintosh], "The most Demosthenian orator who has appeared since the days of Demosthenes." Without the admirable arrangement and lucid order which enabled Mr Pitt to trace, through all the details of a complicated question, the ruling principle which he wished to impress upon his audience, he possessed a greater power of turning to his own advantage the incidents of a debate, or admissions of an antagonist, and was unrivalled in the power and eloquence of his reply. In the outset of his speech, he often laboured under a hesitation of expression, and was ungainly or awkward in manner; but as he warmed with his subject, his oratory became more rapid, his delivery impassioned; and, before it closed, the

enraptured senate often hung in breathless suspense on his words. He was an accomplished classical scholar, and was master of an extraordinary power of turning to the best advantage the information which he possessed, or had gained during the debate. But his habits were too desultory, his indolence too great, his love of pleasure too powerful, to permit him to acquire extensive knowledge. Respectable as a historian, the fragment of the annals of the revolution which he composed is justly admired, from the purity of its style and the manliness of its sentiments; but the pen was too cold an instrument to convey the fervid bursts of his eloquence, and the reader will look in vain for the impassioned flow of the parliamentary orator. It is in the debates of the House of Commons that his real greatness is to be seen; and a vigorous intellect will seldom receive higher gratification than from studying the vehement declamation, the powerful and fervent reasoning, by which his great speeches there are distinguished.

But all this notwithstanding, the fame of Mr Fox is on the decline; not from a diminished sense of his genius, but an altered view, among the thinking few at least, of his principles. With the extinction of the generation which witnessed his parliamentary efforts, with the death of his friends who were captivated by his social qualities, his vast reputation is sensibly diminishing. Time, the mighty agent which separates truth from falsehood; experience, which dispels the most general illusions; suffering, which extinguishes the warmest anticipations, when unfounded in human nature, have separated the wheat from the chaff in his principles. In so far as he sought to uphold the principles of general freedom, and defend the cause of the unfortunate and oppressed, in whatever country,—in so far as he protected in legislation the

freedom of the press, and stopped the infamous traffic in human flesh,—his efforts will ever command the respect and sympathy of mankind. But in so far as he sought to advance this cause, by advocating the principles of democratic power; in so far as he supported the wild projects of the French revolutionists, and palliated, when he could not defend, their atrocious escapades; in so far as he did his utmost to transfer to this country the same destructive doctrines, and, under the name of reform, sought to give an entrance here to Jacobin fanaticism and infidel zeal; in so far as he counselled peace, and recommended concession, when peace would have been the commencement of civil warfare, and concession a crouching to revolutionary ambition, he supported principles calculated to destroy all the objects which he himself had in view, and induce the very tyranny against which the thunders of his eloquence were directed.

TALLEYRAND.

BORN 1754. DIED 1838.]

BROUGHAM.

AMONG the eminent men who figured in the eventful history of the French Revolution was M. Talleyrand; and whether in that scene, or in any portion of modern annals, we shall in vain look for one who represents a more interesting subject of history. His whole story was marked with strange peculiarities, from the period of infancy to the latest scenes of a life protracted to extreme but vigorous and undecayed old age. Born to represent one of the noblest families of France, an accident struck him with incurable lameness, and the cruel habits of their pampered caste made his family add to this infliction the deprivation of his rank as eldest son. He was thus set aside for a brother whose faculties were far more crippled by nature than his bodily frame had been by mischance, and was condemned to the ecclesiastical state by way of at once providing for him, and getting rid of him.

The great event of modern times how converted all Frenchmen into politicians. M. Talleyrand did not long hesitate in choosing his part. He sided with the Revolution, and continued to act with them, joining those patriotic members of the clerical body who gave up their revenues to the demand of the country, and sacrificed their exclusive

privileges to the rights of the community. But when the violence of the Republican leaders, disdaining all bounds of prudence, or justice, or humanity, threatened to involve the whole country in anarchy and blood, he quitted the scene, and retired first to this country, where he passed a year or two, and then to America, where he remained until the more regular government of the Executive Directory tempered the violence of the Revolution, and restored order to the state. Since that period he always filled the highest stations either at home or in the diplomatic service, except during a part of the Restoration government, when the incurable folly of those princes who, as he said himself, had come back from their long exile without having either learned or forgotten anything, deemed it prudent to lay upon the shelf the ablest and most experienced men in the country.

If the integrity of this famous personage be the subject of unavoidable controversy, and if our opinion regarding it must of necessity be clouded with some doubts, and at best be difficult satisfactorily to fix, upon the talents with which he was gifted, and his successful cultivation of them, there can be no question at all, and our view of them is unclouded and clear. His capacity was most vigorous and enlarged. Few men have ever been endowed with a stronger natural understanding, or have given it a more diligent culture with a view to the pursuits in which he was to employ it. His singular acuteness could at once penetrate every subject; his clearness of perception at a glance unravelled all complication, and presented each matter distinct and unencumbered; his sound, plain, manly sense at a blow got rid of all the husk, and pierced immediately to the kernel; a cloud of words was wholly thrown away upon him; he cared

nothing for all the declamation in the world; ingenious topics, fine comparisons, cases in point, epigrammatic sentences, all passed innocuous over his head. So the storms of passion blew unheeded past one whose temper nothing could ruffle, and whose path toward his object nothing could obstruct. It was a lesson and a study as well as a marvel to see him disconcert, with a look of his keen eye or the motion of his chin, a whole piece of wordy talk, and far-fetched and fine-spun argument, without condescending to utter in the deep tones of his most powerful voice so much as a word or an interjection, far less to overthrow the flimsy structure with an irresistible remark, or consume it with a withering sarcasm. Whoever conversed with him, or saw him in conversation, at once learned both how dangerous a thing it was to indulge before him in loose prosing, or in false reasoning, or in frothy declamation; and how fatal an error he would commit who should take the veteran statesman's good-natured smile for an innocent insensibility to the ludicrous, and his apparently passive want of all effort for permanent indolence of mind. There are many living examples of persons not meanly gifted who, in the calm of his placid society, have been wrecked on many such shoals as these.

Although M. Talleyrand never cultivated the art of oratory, yet his brilliant wit, enlivening a constant vein of deep sense and original observation, and his extraordinary mastery over all the resources of the language in which he expressed himself, gave to the efforts of his pen, as well as to his conversation, a relish, a charm, and a grace that few indeed have ever attained, and certainly none have surpassed.

WILLIAM PITT.

[BORN 1759. DIED 1806.]

MACAULAY.

NO person could hear Pitt without perceiving him to be a man of high, intrepid, and commanding spirit, proudly conscious of his own rectitude and of his own intellectual superiority, incapable of the low vices of fear and envy, but too prone to feel and to show disdain. Pride, indeed, pervaded the whole man; was written in the harsh, rigid lines of his face; was marked by the way in which he walked, in which he sate, in which he stood, and, above all, in which he bowed. Such pride, of course, inflicted many wounds. It may confidently be affirmed that there cannot be found, in all the ten thousand invectives written against Fox, a word indicating that his demeanour had ever made a single personal enemy. On the other hand, several men of note, who had been partial to Pitt, and who to the last continued to approve his public conduct and to support his administration,—Cumberland, for example, Boswell, and Matthias,—were so much irritated by the contempt with which he treated them, that they complained in print of their wrongs. But his pride, though it made him bitterly disliked by individuals, inspired the great body of his admirers in Parliament and throughout the country with respect and confidence. They took him at his own valua-

tion. They saw that his self-esteem was not that of an upstart who was drunk with good luck and with applause, and who, if fortune turned, would sink from arrogance into abject humility. It was that of the magnanimous man so finely described by Aristotle in the Ethics, of the man who thinks himself worthy of great things, being in truth worthy. It sprang from a consciousness of great powers and great virtues, and was never so conspicuously displayed as in the midst of difficulties and dangers which would have unnerved and bowed down any ordinary mind. It was closely connected, too, with an ambition which had no mixture of low cupidity. Poor himself, he was surrounded by friends on whom he had bestowed £3000, £6000, £10,000 a year. Plain "Mister" himself, he made more "Lords" than any three ministers that had preceded him. The garter, for which the first dukes in the kingdom were contending, was repeatedly offered to him, and offered in vain.

The correctness of his private life added much to the dignity of his public character. In the relations of son, brother, uncle, master, friend, his conduct was exemplary. In the small circle of his intimate associates, he was amiable, affectionate, even playful. They loved him sincerely, they regretted him long, and they would hardly admit that he who was so kind and gentle with them could be stern and haughty with others. He indulged, indeed, somewhat too freely in wine, which he had early been directed to take as a medicine, and which use had made a necessary of life to him. But it was very seldom that any indication of undue excess could be detected in his tones or gestures; and, in truth, two bottles of port were little more to him than two dishes of tea. He had, when he was first introduced into the clubs of St James' Street, shown a strong

taste for play, but he had the prudence and the resolution to stop before this taste had acquired the strength of habit. From the passion which generally exercises the most tyrannical dominion over the young, he possessed an immunity which is probably to be ascribed partly to his temperament, and partly to his situation. His constitution was feeble; he was very shy, and he was very busy. The strictness of his morals furnished such buffoons as Peter Pindar and Captain Morris with an inexhaustible theme for merriment of no very delicate kind. But the great body of the middle class of Englishmen could not see the joke. They warmly praised the young statesman for commanding his passions, and for covering his frailties, if he had frailties, with decorous obscurity; and would have been very far indeed from thinking better of him if he had vindicated himself from the taunts of his enemies, by taking under his protection a Nancy Parsons or a Marianne Clark.

History will vindicate the real man from calumny, disguised under the semblance of adulation, and will exhibit him as what he was,—a minister of great talents, honest intentions and liberal opinions, pre-eminently qualified, intellectually and morally, for the part of a parliamentary leader, and capable of administering, with prudence and moderation, the government of a prosperous and tranquil country, but unequal to surprising and terrible emergencies, and liable, in such emergencies, to err grievously, both on the side of weakness and the side of violence.

MIRABEAU.

[BORN 1749. DIED 1791.]

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

IN any age and country, Mirabeau must have been an extraordinary man. We may wish, the more because we wish in vain, that he had lived in an age of religious faith, when the solar centre of the idea of a God might have harmonised and subdued his cometary powers. Had he lived in the time of the Reformation, he had been either a Huguenot of the Huguenots, or a fiercer Guise; but thrown on an age and a country of rampant denial and licentiousness, he must deny and be lewd on a colossal scale. He was not, we must remark, of that higher order of minds whose individualism, approaching the infinite, stands alone in whatever age, and which rejects or selects influences according to its pleasure. Mirabeau belonged to that class whose commission is to exaggerate with effect the tendency and spirit of their nation and period, and thus to precipitate either their sublimation or their *reductio ad absurdum*. In him the French beheld all their own peculiarities, passions, and powers, magnified into magnificent caricature, even as they had seen them exhibited in a miniature school in Voltaire; and hence their intoxicated admiration, and their wild sorrow at his death. When he fell, it

was as the fall of the statue on the summit of their national column.

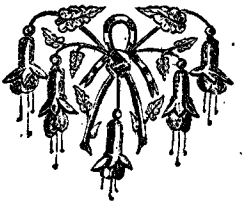
Mirabeau, as the basis of his intellectual character, possessed intuitive sagacity and sharp common sense. He was "all eye." His very arm outstretched and finger up-pointed, seemed to say, no motion, no gesture of such a man is blind or insignificant. His very silence is full of meaning; his looks are as winged as the words of others. Mirabeau's insight was sharpened by experience, by calamity, by vice, by the very despair which had once been the tenant of his bosom. "The glance of melancholy is a fearful gift." Add the intellect of a fallen demi-god to the savage irritation of a flayed wild beast, and the result shall be the hideous and exasperated penetration of a Mirabeau. The rasping recollections of his persecuted childhood and wandering youth, the smouldering ashes of his hundred amours, the "sweltered venom" collected in his long years of captivity, along with his uncertain prospects and unsettled principles, had not only hardened his heart, but given an unnatural stimulus to his understanding, which united the coherence of sanity with the cunning power and fury of madness. This wondrously endowed and frightfully soured nature was by the Revolution, its incidents, adventures, and characters, supplied with an abundance of food sure to turn to poison the moment it was swallowed, and to nourish into keener activity his perverted powers.

To counterbalance this strongly stimulated self-confident and defiant intellect, there was little or no moral sense,—whether, as we have heard it alleged of certain characters it was omitted in his composition, or burned out of him by the combined fires of cruelty on the part of his father, and excess in his own, we cannot say,—but it did become micro-

scopically small. Indeed, it seems to us to have been a most merciful arrangement for Mirabeau's fame, that he died before the revolutionary panic had come to its height. In all probability he would have acted the sanguinary tyrant on a larger scale than any of the Terrorists; for France had come to such an apoplectic crisis, that blood must relieve her. All that was wanted was a hand unprincipled and daring enough to apply the lancet. Who bolder and more unprincipled than Mirabeau? and who had passed through such an indurating and embittering process? Possessed of a thousand wrongs, steeled by atheism, drained of humanity, he had undoubtedly more wisdom, culture, and self-command than his brother revolutionists, and would have been a butcher of genius, and scattered about her blood more elegantly and gracefully than they. But in him, too, slumbered the savage cruelty of a Marat; and in certain circumstances he would have been equally unscrupulous and unsparing.

Mirabeau's death was invested with dramatic interest. He died in the midst of his career. He sank like an island; he died when all eyes in Europe were fixed on him; he died while many saw a crown hovering over his head; he died undiscovered, concealing his future plans in the abyss of his bosom, and able to "adjust his mantle ere he fell;" he died reluctant, less at dying than at not being permitted to live. All his properties seemed to rise up around him as he was leaving the world. His voluptuousness must have one other full draught: "Crown me with flowers, sprinkle me with perfumes, that I may thus enter on the eternal sleep." His levity must have one more ghastly smile, "What!" as he heard the cannon roaring, "have we the funeral ere the Achilles be dead." His vanity must cry out, "They will

miss me when I am gone. Aye, support that head; would I could leave thee it!" His wild unbelief must once more flash up like a volcano fading in the dawn: "If that Sun be not God, he is cousin-german to him;" and having thus gathered his powers and passions in full pomp around his dying couch, he bade them and the world farewell.



ROBESPIERRE.

[BORN 1759. DIED 1794.]

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

ROBESPIERRE reminds us much of the worst species of the Covenanter, a picture of whom is faithfully drawn by Sir Walter Scott in Burley, and our illustrious clansman, "the gifted Gilfillan." Such beings there did exist, and probably exist still, who united a firm belief in certain religious dogmas to the most woeful want of moral principle and human feeling, and were ready to fight what they deemed God's cause with the weapons of the devil. Their cruelties were cool and systematic. They ask a blessing on their assassinations, as though savages were to begin and end their cannibal meals with prayer. Such men were hopelessly steeled against every sentiment of humanity. Mercy to their enemies seemed to them treason against God. No adversary could escape from them. A tiger may feed to repletion, or be disarmed by drowsiness, but who could hope to appease the ghost of a tiger, did such walk? Ghosts of tigers,—never slumbering, never sleeping, cold in their eternal hunger, pursuing relentlessly their devouring way,—were the religious fanatics, the Dalziels and Claverhouses, as well as the Burleys and Mucklewraths.

To the same order of men belonged Robespierre, modified, of course, in character and belief by the influences of

his period. The miscalled creed of the philosophers of France, in the eighteenth century, which with many of themselves was a mere divertissement to their intellects, or a painted screen for their vices, sunk deep into the heart of Robespierre, and became a conviction and a reality to him. So far it was well; but, alas! the creed was heartless and immoral, as well as false. Laying down a wide object, it permitted every license of vice or cruelty in the paths through which it was to be gained. Robespierre became accordingly the worst of sinners—a sinner upon system, a political antinomian, glorying in his shame; to whom blood became at last an abstraction and a shadow; the guillotine only a tremendous shuttle, weaving a well-ordered political web; and the tidings of the fall of a thousand heads agreeably indifferent, as to the farmer the news of a cleared hay or harvest field.

Carlyle frequently admits Robespierre's sincerity, and yet rates him as little other than a sham. We account for this as we did in the case of Marat. He is regarded as a small sincerity; and the sincerity of a small man contracts, to Carlyle's eye, something of the ludicrous air in which a liliputian warrior, shouldering his straw-sized musket and firing his lead-drop bullets, seemed to Gulliver. "Bravo, my little hero," shouts the historian, with a loud laugh, as he sees him, with "sky-blue breeches," patronising the houseless idea of a divine being; "prop away at the tottering heavens with that new nine-pin of thine; but why is there not rather a little nice doll of an image in those showy inexpressibles, to draw out and complete the conversion of thy people; and why not say, 'These be thy gods, O toy and toad worshipping France!'" To bring him to respect, while he admits, the sincerity, we would need to prove the smallness of our Arras

advocate. Now, compared to truly great men, such as Cromwell, or to extraordinary men, such as Napoleon, Mirabeau, and Danton, Robespierre was small enough. But surely it was no pigmy whose voice, calm, dispassionate, and articulate, ruled lunatic France,—who preserved an icy coolness amid a land of lava,—who mastered, though only for a moment, a power like the Revolution,—and who threw from his pedestal, though it was by assailing in an unguarded hour, a statue so colossal as Danton's. Rigid Roman-like purpose; keen, if uninspired, vision; the thousand eyes of an Argus, if not the head of a Jove or the fist of a Hercules; perseverance, honesty, and first-rate business qualities, we must allow to Robespierre, unless we account for his influence by satanic possession, and say, "Either no dunce, or diabolus." Carlyle attributes his defeat and downfall to his pertinacious pursuit of a shallow logic to its utmost consequences. Probably he thus expresses, in his own way, the view we have already sought to indicate. Robespierre was the sincere, consistent, unclean apostle of an unclean system,—a system of deism in theology, of libertinism in morals, of mobocracy in politics, of a gospel according to Jean Jacques,—a gospel of liberty, equality, fraternity; a liberty ending in general bondage, an equality terminating in the despotism of unprincipled talent, a fraternity dipping its ties in blood. With faithful unfaltering footsteps, through good report and bad report, he followed the genius of revolution in all her devious, dark, dangerous, or triumphant paths, till she at last turned round in anger, like a dogged fiend, and rent him in pieces.

PALMERSTON.

[BORN 1784. DIED 1865.]

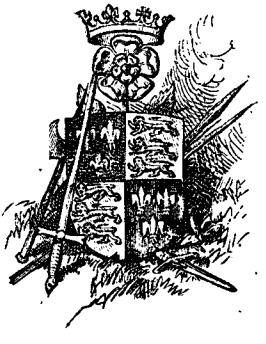
BLACKWOOD.

HE undoubtedly was an Englishman to the backbone. He was jealous of the honour of his country, though not always, perhaps, judicious in the means which he adopted to maintain it, and knew better than any man of his day how to manage a recalcitrant cabinet and an unruly House of Commons. But he was more than all this. Ever since he attained the object of his ambition, for it was late of being matured, he has been our chief, we might almost say our only, defence against the levelling purposes of a powerful section of his own administration. That he yielded too much and too often to the pressure which they applied, cannot, we are afraid, be disputed. We could name many more questions than the repeal of the paper duties, and the policy to be pursued in the quarrel between Germany and Denmark, on which he postponed the deliberate convictions of his own judgment to the violence of those who differed from him. But for these acts of weakness great allowances are to be made. He was committed to the Liberal party—his sympathies went not with it, neither did his reason ever approve the objects which it seeks; but he had gone over to it in a moment of strong personal irritation, and was never afterwards able to find or to make an

opportunity of returning to his first love. Once, and once only, such opportunity presented itself, and he put it from him. His mind was then dazzled by what he believed to be the sure prospect of himself attaining to that eminence which, had he accepted Lord Derby's proposals, he must have helped another to reach. And with all his manliness, with all his patriotism, Lord Palmerston, from the day when he first opened his heart to the whispers of personal ambition, became her slave. But though we may not approve either the course which he adopted on that occasion, or his manner of adopting it, we can understand both, and, looking to the idiosyncrasies of the man, make large allowance for them. So far as the gratification of his own desires was concerned, his plan succeeded. That the country gained anything from his first accession to power, and the patching-up of an inglorious peace, just as it had mustered strength to prosecute the war, is quite another matter.

Having once put himself at the head of the Liberal party, Lord Palmerston could no longer regard the Tories in the light of possible colleagues on some future occasion. He did not, however, throw over his old Tory notions. He was still in the main the pupil of Canning, a leading scholar in the school which Canning had founded, and he did his best —this much we readily allow—to act up to his master's views, as change of time and circumstances appeared to him to have modified them. Lord Palmerston was no more disposed to interrupt the settlement of 1831 than the staunchest reformer sitting on the bench immediately opposite to his own. More prudent than his eloquent master, he took care never to say so in express terms. But while appearing to accept the schemes of others, he always managed, as often as they touched the outer hem of success, to thwart them,

and to thwart them with such perfect adroitness as left no ground to his baffled colleagues on which to establish an open charge against him. Mr Milner Gibson, Mr Villiers, and Mr Gladstone know as well as we do that, in the complaints which he made of Lord Palmerston's treachery on the matter of the Reform Bill of 1860, Mr Bright is substantially correct; yet Mr Milner Gibson, Mr Villiers, and Mr Gladstone are no more able to prove the fact than we are ourselves. For this, his memory will always be held in respect by us. He was a good Conservative so far; fortune greatly favouring him through the instrumentality of an opposition strong enough to support him whenever he appealed to it against his own friends.



Philosophers and Men of Science.

SOCRATES.

[BORN B.C. 468. DIED B.C. 399.]

GROTE.

AUTHORS describe the private life and habits of Socrates, his contented poverty, justice, temperance, in the largest sense of the word, and self-sufficing independence of character. On most of these points, too, Aristophanes and the other comic writers, so far as their testimony counts for any thing, appear as confirmatory witnesses; for they abound in jests on the coarse fare, shabby and scanty clothing, bare feet and pale face, poor and joyless life of Socrates. Of the circumstances of his life we are almost totally ignorant. He served as an hoplite in Potidæa, at Delium, and Amphipoles, with credit, apparently, in all, though exaggerated encomiums on the part of his friends provoked an equally exaggerated scepticism on the part of Athenæus and others. He seems never to have filled any political office until the year B.C. 406, in which the battle of Arginusæ occurred, in which year

he was member of the Senate of Five Hundred, and one of the prytanes of that memorable day, when the proposition of Kallixenus against the six generals was submitted to the public assembly. That during his long life he strictly obeyed the laws, is proved by the fact that none of his numerous enemies ever arraigned him before a court of justice; that he discharged all the duties of an upright man, and a brave as well as pious citizen, may also be confidently asserted. His friends lay especial stress upon his piety, that is, upon his exact discharge of all the religious duties considered as incumbent upon an Athenian.

At what time Socrates relinquished his profession as a statuary we do not know, but it is certain that all the middle and later part of his life, at least, was devoted exclusively to the self-imposed task of teaching, excluding all other business, public or private, and to the neglect of all means of fortune. We can hardly avoid speaking of him as a teacher, though he himself disclaimed the appellation; his practice was to talk, or converse, or "to prattle without end," if we translate the derisory word by which the enemies of philosophy described dialectic conversation. Early in the morning he frequented the public walks, the gymnasia for bodily training, and the schools where youths were receiving instruction. He was to be seen in the market-place at the time when it was most crowded, among the booths and tables where goods were exposed for sale. His whole day was usually spent in this manner. He talked with any one, young or old, rich or poor, who sought to address him, and in the hearing of all who chose to stand by. Not only he never either asked or received any reward, but he made no distinction of persons, never withheld his conversation from any one, and talked upon the same general topics to all.

This extreme publicity of life and conversation was one among the characteristics of Socrates, distinguishing him from all teachers, both before and after him. Next was his persuasion of a special religious mission, restraints, impulses, and communications sent to him by the gods. Taking the belief in such natural intervention generally, it was, indeed, no way peculiar to Socrates; it was that ordinary faith of the ancient world, in so much that the attempts to resolve phenomena into general laws, were looked upon with a certain disapprobation, as indirectly setting it aside. He had been accustomed to hear, even from his childhood, a divine voice, interfering at moments when he was about to act, in the way of restraint, but never in the way of instigation. Such prohibitory warning was wont to come upon him very frequently, not merely on great, but even on small occasions, intercepting what he was about to do or to say. Though later writers speak of this as the demon or genius of Socrates, he himself does not personify it, but treats it merely as "a divine sign, a prophetic or supernatural voice." He was accustomed not only to obey it implicitly, but to speak of it publicly and familiarly to others, so that the fact was well known both to his friends and his enemies. It had always forbidden him to enter upon public life; it forbade him, while the indictment was hanging over him, to take any thought for a prepared defence; and so completely did he march with a consciousness of this bridle in his mouth, that when he felt no check, he assumed that the turning he was about to take was the right one. Though his persuasion on the subject was perfectly sincere, and his obedience constant, yet he never dwelt upon it himself as anything grand or awful, or entitling him to peculiar deference, but spoke of it often in his peculiar strain of familiar playfulness.

Such was the demon or genius of Socrates, as described by himself, and as conceived in the genuine Platonic dialogues—a voice always prohibitory, and bearing exclusively on his own personal conduct. That which Plutarch, and other admirers of Socrates, conceived as a demon, or intermediate being between gods and men, was looked upon by the fathers of the Christian Church as a devil, by Le Clerc as one of the fallen angels, by some other modern commentators as mere ironical phraseology on the part of Socrates himself. Without presuming to determine the question raised in the former hypothesis, I believe the last to be untrue, and that the conviction of Socrates on the point was quite sincere. But though this peculiar form of inspiration belonged exclusively to him, there were also other ways in which he believed himself to have received the special mandates of the gods; not simply checking him, but spurring him on, directing and peremptorily exacting from him a positive course of proceeding. Such distinct mission had been imposed upon him by dreams, by oracular intimations, and by every other means which the gods employed for signifying their special will.

To hear of any man, especially of so illustrious a man, being condemned to death on such accusations as those of heresy and alleged corruption of youth, inspires, at the present day, a sentiment of indignant reprobation, the force of which I have no desire to enfeeble. The fact stands eternally recorded as one among the thousand misdeeds of intolerance, religious and political. But since, amid this catalogue, each item has its own peculiar character, grave or light, we are bound to consider at what point of the scale the condemnation of Socrates is to be placed, and what inference it justifies in regard to the character of the

Athenians. If we examine the circumstances of the case, we will find them all extenuating, and so powerful, indeed, as to reduce such inferences to their minimum, consistent with the general class to which the inference belongs. Though the mischievous principle of intolerance cannot be denied, yet all the circumstances show that principle was neither irritable nor predominant in the Athenian bosom,—that even a large body of collateral antipathies did not readily call it forth against any individual,—that the more liberal and generous dispositions, which deadened its malignity, were of steady efficacy, not easily overborne; and that the condemnation ought to count as one of the least gloomy items in an essentially gloomy catalogue.



PLATO.

[BORN B.C. 428. DIED B.C. 347.]

BRUCKER.

THE personal character of Plato has been very differently represented. On the one hand, his encomiasts have not failed to adorn him with every excellence, and to express the most superstitious veneration for his memory. His enemies, on the other, have not scrupled to load him with reproach, and charge him with practices shamefully inconsistent with the purity and dignity of the philosophical character. We cannot so implicitly adopt the panegyrics of the former as to suppose him to have been free from human frailties, and we have a right to require much better proofs than his calumniators have adduced before we can suppose him to have been capable of sinking from the sublime speculations of philosophy into the most infamous vices. To load the character of a great man with infamy upon slight suspicions is a species of impiety.

Several anecdotes are preserved which reflect honour upon the moral principles and character of Plato. Such was his command of temper that, when he was lifting up his hand to correct his servant for some offence, perceiving himself angry, he kept his arm fixed in that posture, and said to a friend who, coming in at that instant, asked him what he was doing, "I am punishing a passionate man." At another

time he said to one of his slaves, "I would chastise you if I were not angry." At the Olympic Games he happened to keep a day with some strangers who were much delighted with his easy and affable conversation, but were no further informed concerning him than that his name was Plato, for he had purposely avoided saying anything concerning Socrates or the Academy. At parting, he invited them, when they should visit Athens, to take up their residence at his house. Not long afterwards they accepted his invitation, and were courteously entertained. During their stay they requested that he would introduce them to his namesake, the famous philosopher, and show them his academy. Plato, smiling, said, "I am the person you wish to see." The discovery surprised them exceedingly, for they could not easily persuade themselves that so eminent a philosopher would condescend to converse so familiarly with strangers. When Plato was told that his enemies were busily employed in circulating reports to his disadvantage, he said, "I will live so that none will believe them." One of his friends remarking that he seemed as desirous to learn himself as to teach others, asked him how long he intended to be a scholar. "As long," said he, "as I am not ashamed to be wiser and better."

It is from the writings of Plato chiefly that we are to form a judgment of his merits as a philosopher, and of the service which he rendered to science. No one can be conversant with these without perceiving that his diction always retained a strong tincture of that poetical spirit which he discovered in his first productions. This is the principal ground of those lofty encomiums which both ancient and modern critics have passed upon his language, and in particular of the high estimation in which it was held by Cicero,

who, treating on the subject of language, says that, "if Jupiter were to speak in the Greek tongue, he would borrow the style of Plato." The accurate Stagirite described it "as a middle species of diction between verse and prose." Some of his Dialogues are elevated by such sublime and glowing conceptions, are enriched by such copious and splendid diction, and flow in so harmonious a rhythmus that they may truly be pronounced highly poetical. Even upon abstract subjects, whether moral, metaphysical, or mathematical, the language of Plato is often clear as the running stream, and, in simplicity and sweetness, vies with the humble violet which perfumes the vale. At other times, however, we find him swelling into the turgid style, a tincture of which he seems to have retained from his juvenile studies, and involving himself in obscurities, which were the offspring of lofty fancy, or were borrowed from the Italic school. One circumstance it is particularly necessary to remark, that among other things which Plato received from foreign philosophy, he was careful to borrow the art of concealing his own opinions. His inclination towards this kind of concealment appears from the obscure language which abounds in his writings, and may indeed be learned from his own express assertions. "It is a difficult thing," says he, "to discover the nature of the Creator of the universe; and, being discovered, it is impossible, and would even be impious, to expose the discovery to vulgar understandings." Again: "It would be to no purpose to lay open to mankind at large the doctrines of philosophy, which are adapted only to the comprehension of a few intelligent persons who, from imperfect hints, are capable of conceiving their full import." This concealed method of philosophising he was induced to adopt from a regard to his personal safety, and from motives

of vanity. The truth [as to what he accomplished] appears to have been that Plato, ambitious of the honour of forming a new sect, and endowed by nature with more brilliancy of fancy than strength of judgment, collected the tenets of other philosophers, which were in many particulars contradictory, and could by no exertion of ingenuity be brought to coalesce; and that, out of this heterogeneous mass, he framed a confused system, destitute of form and consistency. This will be acknowledged by every one who, in perusing the philosophical writings of Plato, is capable of divesting himself of that blind respect for antiquity by which the learned so frequently suffer themselves to be misled.



ARISTOTLE.

[BORN B.C. 384. DIED B.C. 322.]

BRUCKER.

CONCERNING the character of Aristotle, nothing can be more contradictory than the accounts of different writers. Some of his panegyrists, not contented with ascribing to him the virtues of a philosopher, or rather, perhaps, jealous of the credit which heathen philosophy might acquire from so illustrious a name, have ascribed his wisdom to divine revelation. Jews have said that he gained his philosophy in Judea, and borrowed his moral doctrine from Solomon, and have even asserted that he was of the seed of Israel, and the tribe of Benjamin. Christians have assigned him a place amongst those who were supernaturally ordained to prepare the way for divine revelation, and have acknowledged themselves indebted to the assistance of the peripatetic philosophy for the depth and accuracy of their acquaintance with the sublime mysteries of religion. Others, who have confined their encomiums within the limits of probability, have said that Aristotle was an illustrious pattern of gratitude, moderation, and the love of truth; and, in confirmation of this general praise, have referred to his behaviour to his preceptor, his friends, and his countrymen, and to the celebrated apophthegm, which has been com-

monly ascribed to him: "I respect Plato, I respect Socrates, but I respect truth still more."

On the other hand, there have not been wanting writers who have represented Aristotle as the most infamous of human beings, and charged him with every kind of impiety and wickedness. Many of the calumnies against his memory which have been transmitted to posterity doubtless originated in the jealousy and envy of the rival sects which were contemporaries of the peripatetic school. To this source may be fairly referred the abuse of Timæus the Tauromenite, who says that Aristotle, when he was a young man, after wasting his patrimony in prodigality, opened a shop for medicines in Athens, and that he was a pretender to learning, a vile parasite, and addicted to gluttony and debauchery. To the same origin we may ascribe the inconsistent and absurd cavils which have been raised against his reputation, on the ground of his attachment to Hermias, and the honours which he paid to his memory, and to that of his wife Pythias. He may perhaps be justly censured for having taught his pupil Alexander principles of morals and policy which were accommodated to the manners of a court, and which might easily be rendered subservient to his ambitious views; and it cannot be doubted that his philosophical doctrines concerning nature were not favourable to the public forms of religion. But neither his doctrines nor his life afford sufficient grounds for condemning him as an advocate for immorality or impiety.

As a writer, there is no doubt that Aristotle is entitled to the praise of deep erudition. At the same time, it is to be owned that he is frequently deserving of censure for giving a partial and unfair representation of the opinions of his predecessors in philosophy, that he might the more easily refute

them, and that he seems to have made it the principal object of his extensive reading to depreciate the wisdom of all preceding ages. In short, whilst in point of genius we rank Aristotle in the first class of men, and whilst we ascribe to him every attainment which, at the period when he lived, indefatigable industry, united with superior abilities, could reach, we must add that his reputation in philosophy is in some measure tarnished by a too daring spirit of contradiction and innovation, and, in morals by an artful conformity to the manners of the age in which he lived.

Most of the subjects on which Aristotle treats are in the highest degree abstruse, and difficult to be comprehended. Universal ideas of existence; attributes and relations separated from real being; modes of reasoning considered abstractedly; metaphysical disquisitions concerning matter, mind, and duty; explanations of nature, deduced from conjecture rather than experience; vague and indeterminate notions, which were probably never clearly conceived by the author himself; and subtle distinctions, merely verbal, are the materials which chiefly fill up the voluminous writings of Aristotle. The obscurity necessarily arising from the nature of the subjects is greatly increased by the manner in which he treats them. Aulus Gellius relates that, when Alexander complained to Aristotle that he had divulged in his writings his esotric doctrines, Aristotle replied that these doctrines were published, and *not* published, since what he had written upon these subjects were intelligible only to such as had been his hearers. The story will be easily credited by those who are conversant with his works. No writer ever afforded more frequent examples of the poet's maxim—

"Brevis esse laboro,
Obscurus fio."

He affects close periods and a concise diction. He often supposes things to be known which have either not been before explained, or may easily have escaped the reader's memory. It will tend to account in some measure for the obscurity of Aristotle's writings, if his leading design be considered. There can be no doubt that an ambitious desire of distinguishing himself above all other philosophers induced him to become the founder of a new sect; and that, for the sake of increasing the lustre of his own system, he made every expedient to eclipse that of others. His object was to erect his own edifice upon the ruin of every other structure. As Lord Bacon has finely remarked: "Like a Turkish despot, he thought he could not reign secure unless all his brethren were slain."



COPERNICUS.

[BORN 1473. DIED 1543.]

OLMSTED.

COPERNICUS, a native of Prussia, born in 1473, resorted to Italy at twenty-five years of age, for the purpose of studying astronomy, where he resided a number of years. Thus prepared, he returned to his native country, and having acquired an ecclesiastical living that was adequate to his support in his frugal mode of life, he established himself at Frauenberg, a small town near the mouth of the Vistula, where he spent nearly forty years in observing the heavens, and meditating on the celestial motions. He occupied the upper part of a humble farm-house, through the roof of which he could find access to an unobstructed sky, and there he carried on his observations. His instruments, however, were few and imperfect, and it does not appear that he added any thing to the art of practical astronomy. This was reserved for Tycho Brahé, who came half a century after him. Nor did Copernicus enrich the science with any important discoveries. It was not so much his genius or taste to search for new bodies or new phenomena among the stars, as it was to explain the reasons of the most obvious and well known appearances and motions of the heavenly bodies. With this view he gave his mind to long-continued and profound meditation.

Copernicus tells us that he was first led to think that the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies in their diurnal revolution were owing to the real motion of the earth in the opposite direction, from observing instances of the same kind among terrestrial objects—as when the shore seems to the mariner to recede as he rapidly sails from it, and as the trees and other objects seem to glide by us when in riding swiftly past them we lose the consciousness of our own motion. He was also smitten with the simplicity prevalent in all the works and operations of nature, which is more and more conspicuous the more they are understood; and he hence concluded that the planets do not move in the complicated paths which most preceding astronomers assigned to them.

The hypothesis which he espoused and defended—being substantially the same as that proposed by Pythagoras 500 years before the Christian era—supposes, first, that the apparent movement of the sun by day, and of the moon and stars by night, from east to west, result from the actual revolution of the earth on its own axis from west to east; and secondly, that the earth and all the planets revolve about the sun in circular orbits. This hypothesis, when he first assumed it, was with him, as it had been with Pythagoras, little more than mere conjecture. The arguments by which its truth was to be finally established were not yet developed, and could not be without the aid of the telescope, which was not yet invented. Upon this hypothesis, however, he set out to explain all the phenomena of the visible heavens, as the diurnal revolutions of the sun, moon, and stars, the slow progress of the planets through the signs of the zodiac, and the numerous irregularities to which the planetary motions are subject. These last are apparently so capricious,

being for some time forward, then stationary, then backward, then stationary again, and finally, direct a second time to the order of the signs, and constantly varying in the velocity of their movements, that nothing but long-continued and severe meditation could have solved all these appearances in conformity with the idea that each planet is pursuing its simple way all the while in a circle round the sun.

Ignorant as Copernicus was of the principle of gravitation, and of most of the laws of motion, he could go but little way in following out the consequences of his own hypothesis; and all that can be claimed for him is, that he solved, by means of it, most of the common phenomena of the celestial motions. He indeed got upon the road to truth, and advanced some way in its sure path, but he was able to produce but few independent proofs to show that it was the truth. It was only quite at the close of his life that he published his system to the world, and that only at the urgent request of his friends,—anticipating, perhaps, the opposition of a bigoted priesthood, whose fury was afterwards poured upon the head of Galileo for maintaining the same doctrines. Accordingly, for nearly a century after the publication of the system of Copernicus, he gained few disciples. Tycho Brahé rejected it and proposed one of his own, and it would probably have fallen quite into oblivion, had not the observations of Galileo, with his newly-invented telescope, brought to light innumerable proofs, far more cogent than any which Copernicus himself had been able to devise.

LORD BACON.

[BORN 1561. DIED 1626.]

MACAULAY.

AT this time [when the foundations of the scholastic system were being shaken] Bacon appeared. It is altogether incorrect to say, as has often been said, that he was the first man who rose up against the Aristotelian philosophy, when in the height of its power. The authority of that philosophy had received a fatal blow long before he was born. Several speculators, among whom Ramus is the best known, had recently attempted to form new sects. Bacon's own expressions about the state of opinion in the time of Luther are clear and strong. "*Accedebant*," says he, "*odium et contemptus, illis ipsis temporibus ortus erga scholasticos.*" And again: "*Scholasticorum doctrina despectui prorsus haberi cœpit tanquam aspera et barbara.*" The part which Bacon played in this great change was the part, not of Robespierre, but of Buonaparte. The ancient order of things had been subverted. Some bigots still cherished, with devoted loyalty, the remembrance of the fallen monarchy, and exerted themselves to effect a restoration. But the majority had no such feeling. Freed, yet not knowing how to use their freedom, they pursued no determinate course, and had found no leader capable of conducting them.

That leader at length arose. The philosophy which he taught was essentially new. It differed from that of the celebrated ancient teachers, not merely in method, but also in object. Its object was the good of mankind, in the sense in which the mass of mankind always have understood, and always will understand, the word good. "*Meditor*," says Bacon, "*instaurationem philosophiæ ejusmodi quæ nihil inanis aut abstracti habeat, quæque vitæ humanæ conditiones in melius provehat.*"

He was not the person who first showed that, by the inductive method alone, new truth could be discovered. But he was the person who first turned the minds of speculative men, long occupied in verbal disputes, to the discovery of new and useful truth; and, by doing so, he at once gave to the inductive method an importance and dignity which had never before belonged to it. He was not the maker of that road, he was not the discoverer of that road, he was not the person who first surveyed and mapped that road; but he was the person who first called the public attention to an inexhaustible mine of wealth which had been utterly neglected, and which was accessible by that road alone. By doing so, he caused that road, which had previously been trodden only by peasants, to be frequented by a higher class of travellers.

It is painful to turn from contemplating Bacon's philosophy to contemplate his life. Yet, without so turning, it is impossible fairly to estimate his powers. He left the university at an earlier age than that at which most people repair thither. While yet a boy, he was plunged into the midst of diplomatic business. Thence he passed to the study of a vast technical system of law, and worked his way up through a succession of laborious offices to the highest post in his

profession. In the meantime, he took an active part in every Parliament; he was an adorer of the Crown; he paid court, with the greatest assiduity and address, to all whose favour was likely to be of use to him; he lived much in society; he noted the slightest peculiarities of character, and the slightest changes of fashion. Scarcely any man has led a more stirring life than that which Bacon led from 16 to 60. Scarcely any man has been better entitled to be called a thorough man of the world. The founding of a new philosophy, the imparting of a new direction to the minds of speculators, this was the amusement of his leisure, the work of hours occasionally stolen from the woolsack and the council board. This consideration, while it increases the admiration with which we regard his intellect, increases also our regret that such an intellect should so often have been so unworthily employed.

Had his civil ends continued to be moderate, he would have been not only the Moses but the Joshua of philosophy. He would have fulfilled a large part of his own magnificent predictions. He would have led his followers, not only to the verge, but into the heart of the promised land. He would not merely have pointed out, but would have divided the spoil. Above all, he would have left not only a great, but a spotless name. Mankind would then have been able to esteem their illustrious benefactor. We should not then be compelled to regard his character with mingled contempt and admiration, with mingled aversion and gratitude.

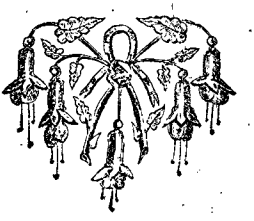
GALILEO.

[BORN 1564. DIED 1642.]

SIR DAVID BREWSTER.

THE account of the trial and sentence of Galileo is pregnant with the deepest interest and instruction. Human nature is here drawn in the darkest colouring, and, in surveying the melancholy picture, it is difficult to decide whether religion or philosophy is most degraded. While we witness the presumptuous priest pronouncing infallible the decrees of his own erring judgment, we see the high-minded philosopher abjuring the eternal and immutable truths which he had himself the glory of establishing. In the ignorance and prejudice of the age, in a too literal interpretation of the language of Scripture, in a mistaken respect for errors which have been venerable from their antiquity, and in the peculiar position which Galileo had taken among the avowed enemies of the Church, we may find a shadow of an apology, evanescent though it be, for the conduct of the Inquisition. But what excuse can we devise for the humiliating abjuration of Galileo? Why did this master-spirit of the age, this high priest of the stars, this representative of science, this hoary sage, whose career of glory was near its consummation—why did he reject the crown of martyrdom which he had himself created, and which, plaited with immortal hands, was about to descend on his head?

If, instead of disavowing the laws of nature, and surrendering in his own person the intellectual dignity of his species, he had boldly asserted the truth of his opinions, and confided his character to posterity, and his cause to an all-ruling Providence, he would have strung up the hair-suspended sabre, and disarmed for ever the hostility which threatened to overwhelm him. The philosopher, however, was supported only by philosophy, and in the love of truth he found a miserable substitute for the hopes of the martyr. Galileo cowered under the fear of man, and his submission was the salvation of the Church. The sword of the Inquisition descended on his prostrate neck; and though the stroke was not physical, yet it fell with a moral influence fatal to the character of its victim, and the dignity of science.



KEPLER.

[BORN 1571. DIED 1630.]

OLMSTED.

IT was fortunate that Kepler in his childhood was removed from the immediate society and example of his parents, and educated at a public school at the expense of the Duke of Wurtemberg. He early imbibed a taste for natural philosophy, but had conceived a strong prejudice against astronomy, and even a contempt for it, inspired, probably, by the arrogant and ridiculous pretensions of the astrologers, who constituted the principal astronomers of his country. A vacant post, however, of astronomy occurred when he was of suitable age to fill it, and he was compelled to take it by the authority of his tutor, though with many protestations on his part, wishing to be provided for in some other more brilliant profession.

Happy is genius when it lights upon a profession entirely consonant to its powers, where the objects successively presented to it are so exactly suited to its nature that they cling to it as the loadstone to its kindred metal among piles of foreign ores. Nothing could have been more congenial to the very mental constitution of Kepler than the study of astronomy, a science where the most capacious understanding may find scope in unison with the most fervid imagination.

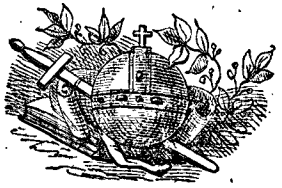
Much as has been said against hypotheses in philosophy, it is nevertheless a fact, that some of the greatest truths have been discovered in the pursuit of hypotheses in themselves entirely false—truths, moreover, far more important than those assumed by the hypotheses,—as Columbus, in searching for a north-west passage to India, discovered a new world. Thus Kepler worked his way through many false and absurd suppositions to some of the most sublime discoveries ever made by man. The fundamental principle which guided him was, however, neither false nor absurd. It was that God, who made the world, had established throughout all His works fixed laws, laws that are often so definite as to be capable of expression in exact numerical terms.

In accordance with these views he sought for numerical relations in the disposition and arrangement of the planets, in respect to their number, the times of their revolution, and their distances from one another. Many, indeed, of the subordinate suppositions which he made were extremely fanciful; but he tried his own hypotheses by a vigorous mathematical test wherever he could apply it; and as soon as he discovered that a supposition would not abide this test, he abandoned it without the least hesitation, and adopted others, which he submitted to the same severe trial, to share, perhaps, the same fate. "After many failures," he observes, "I was comforted by observing that the motions in every case seemed to be connected with the distances, and when there was a great gap between the orbits there was the same between the motions; and I reasoned, that if God had adapted motions to the orbits in some relation to the distances, He had also arranged the distances themselves in relation to something else."

When Galileo began to observe with his telescope, and announced, in rapid succession, his wonderful discoveries, Kepler entered into them with his characteristic enthusiasm, although they subverted many of his favourite hypotheses. But such was his love of truth that he was among the first to congratulate Galileo, and a most engaging correspondence was carried on between these master-spirits. The first planet that occupied the attention of Kepler was Mars, the long and assiduous study of whose motions conducted him at length to the discovery of those great principles called "Kepler's Laws." Rarely do we meet with so remarkable a union of a vivid fancy with a profound intellect. The hasty and extravagant suggestions of the former were submitted to the most laborious calculations, some of which that were of great length he repeated seventy times. This exuberance of his fancy frequently appears in his style of writing, which occasionally assumes a tone ludicrously figurative. He seems constantly to contemplate Mars as a valiant hero, who had hitherto proved invincible, and who would often elude his efforts to conquer him. "While thus triumphing over Mars, and preparing for him, as for one altogether vanquished, tabular prisons and equated eccentric fetters, it is buzzed here and there that the victory is vain, and that the war is raging anew as violently as before; for the enemy left at home a despised captive has burst all the chains of the equation, and broken forth from the prisons of the tables."

Kepler's rapture, upon discovering his third law, that "the squares of the periodical times of the planets are as the cubes of the distances," was unbounded. "What!" says he, "I prophesied two and twenty years ago, as soon as I discovered the five solids among the heavenly orbits, what I firmly

believed, long before I had seen Ptolemy's "Harmonics;" what I had promised my friends in the title of the book ["Harmonics"], which I named before I was sure of my discovery; what sixteen years ago I urged as a thing to be sought; that for which I joined Tycho Brahé; for which I settled in Prague; for which I have devoted the best part of my life to astronomical contemplations—at length I have brought to light and recognised its truth beyond my most sanguine expectations. It is now eighteen months since I got the first glimpse of light, three months since the dawn, very few days since the unveiled sun, most admirable to gaze on, burst out upon me. Nothing holds me; I will indulge in my sacred fury; I will triumph over mankind by the honest confession that I have stolen the golden vases of the Egyptians to build up a tabernacle to my God far from Egypt."



DESCARTES.

[BORN 1596. DIED 1650.]

HALLAM.

AN inquisitive curiosity into the nature and causes of all he saw is said to have distinguished René Descartes' childhood, and this was certainly accompanied by an uncommon facility and clearness of apprehension. Afterwards, on pursuing the examination of the first principles of knowledge, he perceived, not only that he had cause to doubt of the various opinions which he had found current among men from that very circumstance of their variety, but that the sources of all which he had received for truth, themselves—namely, the senses—had afforded him no indisputable certainty. He began to recollect how often he had been misled by appearances, which had at first sight given no intimation of their fallacy, and asked himself in vain by what infallible test he could discern the reality of external objects, or at least their conformity to his idea of them. The strong impressions made in sleep led him to inquire whether all he saw or felt might not be in a dream. It was true that there seemed to be some notions, more elementary than the rest, such as extension, figure, duration, which could not be reckoned fallacious; nor could he avoid owning that, if there were not an existing triangle in the

world, the angles of one conceived by the mind, though it were in sleep, must appear equal to two right angles. But, even in this certitude of demonstration, he soon found something deficient.

Divesting himself thus of all belief in what the world deemed most unquestionable; plunged in an abyss, as it seemed, for a time, he soon found his feet on a rock, from which he sprang upwards to an unclouded sun; doubting all things, abandoning all things, he came to the question, What is it that doubts and denies? Something it must be. He might be deceived by a superior power, but it was he that was deceived. He felt his own existence. The proof of it was that he did feel it; that he had affirmed that he now doubted,—in a word, that he was a thinking substance. *Cogito; ergo sum*—this famous enthymem of the Cartesian philosophy veiled in rather formal language that which was to him, and must be to us all, the eternal basis of conviction, which no argument can strengthen, which no sophistry can impair—the consciousness of a self within a percipient individual Ego.

The certainty of an existing Ego easily led him to that of the operations of the mind, called afterwards by Locke ideas of reflection—the believing, doubting, willing, loving, fearing, which he knew by consciousness, and, indeed, by means of which alone he knew that the Ego existed. He now proceeded a step further; and, reflecting on the simplest truths of arithmetic and geometry, saw that it was as impossible to doubt of them, as of the acts of his mind. But as before he had tried to doubt even of these, on the hypothesis that he might be deceived by a superior intelligent power, he resolved to inquire whether such a power existed, and if it did, whether it could be a deceiver. The

affirmative of the former, and the negative of the latter, Descartes established, by that extremely subtle reasoning, so much celebrated in the seventeenth century, but which has less frequently been deemed conclusive in later times.



LOCKE.

[BORN 1632. DIED 1704.]

HALLAM.

NO quality more distinguishes this first of English metaphysicians than his love of truth. He is of no sect or party; has no oblique design, such as we frequently perceive, of sustaining some tenet which he suppresses; no submissiveness to the opinions of others, nor what very few lay aside, to his own. Without having adopted certain dominant ideas, like Descartes and Malebranche, he follows with inflexible impartiality and unwearied patience the long process of analysis to which he has subjected the human mind. No great writer has been more exempt from vanity, in which he is very advantageously contrasted with Bacon and Descartes; but he is sometimes a little sharp and contemptuous of his predecessors. The originality of Locke is real and unaffected; not that he has derived nothing from others, which would be a great reproach to himself or to them, but whatever he has in common with other philosophers, there is always a tinge of his own thoughts, a modification of the particular tenet, or at least a peculiarity of language, which renders it not very easy of detection. "It was not to be expected," says Stewart, "that in a work so composed, by snatches, to borrow a phrase of the author, he should be able accurately to

draw the line between his own ideas, and the hints for which he was indebted to others." To those who are well acquainted with his speculations, it must appear, indeed, that he had studied diligently the metaphysical writings both of Hobbes and Gassendi, and that he was no stranger to the essays of Montaigne, to the philosophical works of Bacon, and to Malebranche's Enquiry after Truth. That he was familiarly conversant with the Cartesian system may be presumed from what we are told by his biographer,—that it was this which first inspired him with a disgust at the jargon of the schools, and led him into that train of thinking which he afterwards prosecuted so successfully. I do not, however, recollect that he has anywhere in his essay mentioned the name of any one of these authors. It is probable that, when he sat down to write, he found the result of his youthful reading so completely identified with the fruits of his subsequent reflections, that it was impossible for him to attempt a separation of the one from the other, and that thus he was occasionally led to mistake the treasures of memory for those of invention.

There is an accusation that Locke must be reckoned among those who have not admitted a moral faculty of discerning right from wrong to be a part of our constitution. But that there is a law of nature imposed by a Supreme Being, and, consequently, universal, has been so repeatedly asserted in his writings, that it would imply great inattention to question it. It would by no means be difficult to question other tenets of this great man. But the obligations we owe to him for the "Essay on the Human Understanding" are never to be forgotten. It is truly the first real chart of the coasts, wherein some may be laid down incorrectly, but the general relations of all are perceived; and we who find

some things to censure in Locke, have perhaps learned how to censure them from himself: we have thrown off so many false notions and films of prejudice by his help, that we are become capable of judging our master. This has been the fate of all who have pushed onwards the landmarks of science: they have made that easy for inferior men which was painfully laboured through by themselves.



SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

[BORN 1642. DIED 1727.]

VOLTAIRE.

A NEW universe has been discovered by the philosophers of the last century; and this new world was all the more difficult to know that, before then, there was not even a suspicion of its existence. It seemed to the wisest that it was senseless folly to dare even dream that the laws by which the celestial bodies move, and the manner of the action of light, might be discovered. Galileo, in his astronomical discoveries; Kepler, in his calculations; Descartes, at least in part, in his dioptrics; and Newton, in all his works, perceived the mechanism of the forces of the world. In geometry, the infinite has been made the subject of calculation. The circulation of the blood in animals, and of the sap in vegetables, have worked for us a change in nature. A new mode of existence has been given to the body by the pneumatic machine. Objects have been brought near to our eyes by the aid of telescopes. Finally, what Newton has discovered with respect to light is worthy of all that the curiosity of men can look for in its most daring flights, even after all the novelties which had gone before.

Up till the time of Antonio de Dominis, the rainbow had appeared an inexplicable miracle. This philosopher dis-

covered and explained that it was a necessary effect of rain and the sun. Descartes rendered his name immortal by a yet more mathematical exposition of this very natural phenomenon; he calculated the reflection and refraction of light in the drops of rain, and this acuteness had then something of divine about it. But what would he have said if he could have been aware that he was mistaken about the nature of light, that he was not right in taking for granted that it was a globulous body, which extended over the whole universe, requiring only to receive an impetus from the sun in order to be put in action, just like a long staff which moves at one extremity when pressure is applied to the other; that it is very true that light is shot forth by the sun; and, in fine, that it is transmitted from the sun to the earth in about seven minutes, although a cannon ball, if it kept up its speed all the time, would take five and twenty years to perform the same journey? What would his astonishment have been if he had been told, It is false that light is reflected as it rebounds from solid bodies; it is false that bodies are transparent whenever they have large pores; and a man will come who shall demonstrate these paradoxes, and shall anatomise a single ray of light with more dexterity than the cleverest surgeon dissects the human body?

He so well understood the subject of light, that he has determined at what point the art of augmenting it, and of assisting our eyesight by telescopes, must be limited. Descartes, from a noble confidence, which may well be pardoned, to the ardour with which the beginning of an art which had almost been discovered by himself inspired him, hoped to see in the stars, by the aid of magnifying glasses, objects as small as those which we discern upon the earth. Newton has shown that glasses cannot be brought to higher perfection,

because of refraction itself, which, in bringing objects near to us, turns aside too much the elementary rays. He has calculated the proportion of the turning aside of the red and of the blue rays in these glasses; and carrying the demonstration into matters of which the existence was not even suspected, he examines the inequalities which the shape of the glass produces, and those which are caused by refraction. He finds that the object-glass of the telescope being convex on one side and flat on the other, if the flat side is turned towards the object, the defect which arises from the construction and position of the glass is five thousand times less than the defect which arises from refraction; and that thus it is not the shape of the glasses which makes it impossible to bring telescopes to perfection, but that we must lay blame upon the very nature of light itself. This is the reason why he invented a telescope which shows objects by reflection, and not by refraction. He was as yet little known in Europe when he made this discovery. I have seen a little book, composed almost about this time, in which, in speaking of the telescope of Newton, the author takes him for an optician: "*Artifex quidam Anglus nomine Newton.*" Posterity have well avenged him.

LEIBNITZ.

[BORN 1646. DIED 1716.]

DUGALD STEWART.

THIS polysoph affords an example of what a vigorous and versatile genius, seconded by habits of persevering industry, may accomplish within the short span of human life. Even the relaxations with which he was accustomed to fill up his leisure partook of the more general character of his more general engagements. By early and long habit he had acquired a singular facility in the composition of Latin verses, and he seems to have delighted in loading his muse with new fetters of his own contrivance, in addition to those imposed by the laws of classical prosody. The number, besides, of his literary correspondents was immense, including all that was most illustrious in Europe; and the rich materials everywhere scattered over his letters are sufficient of themselves to show that his amusements consisted rather in a change of objects than in a suspension of his mental activity. Yet, while we admire those stupendous monuments of his intellectual energy, we must not forget (if I may borrow the language of Gibbon) that even the powers of Leibnitz were dissipated by the multiplicity of his pursuits. He attempted more than he could finish; he designed more than he could execute; his imagination was too easily satisfied with a bold and

rapid glance on the subject which he was impatient to leave; and he may be compared to those heroes whose empire has been lost in the ambition of universal conquest.

The most instructive lesson to be drawn from the history of Leibnitz is the incompetency of the most splendid gifts of the understanding to advance essentially the interests of metaphysical or ethical science, unless accompanied with that rare devotion to truth, which may be regarded, if not as the basis, at least as one of the most indispensable elements of moral greatness. The chief attraction to the study of philosophy in Leibnitz's mind seems to have been—what many French critics have considered as a chief source of the charms of the imitative arts—the pride of conquering difficulties: a feature of his character which he had probably in his own eye when he remarked, not without some degree of conscious vanity, as a peculiarity in the turn or cast of his intellect, that "to him all difficult things were easy, and all easy things difficult." Hence the disregard manifested in his writings to the simple and obvious conclusions of experience and common sense, and the perpetual effort to unriddle mysteries over which an impenetrable veil is drawn. How happily the wisdom of Locke contrasts with that towering but impotent ambition, which, in the theories of optimism and pre-established harmony, seemed to realise the fabled revolt of the giants against the sovereignty of the gods.

After all, a similarity may be traced between these two great men in one intellectual weakness common to both, a facility in the admission of facts, stamped sufficiently, as we should now think, by their own intrinsic evidence, with the marks of their own incredibility. The observation has been often made with respect to Locke; but it would be difficult to find in Locke's writings anything so absurd as an account,

gravely transmitted by Leibnitz to the Abbé de St Pierre, and by him communicated to the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, of a dog who spoke. No person, liberally educated, could, I believe, be found at present in any Protestant country of Christendom capable of such credulity. By what causes such a revolution in the minds of men has been effected within the short space of one hundred years, I must not stop here to inquire. But in whatever manner the revolution is to be explained, there can be no doubt that this growing disposition to weigh scrupulously the probability of alleged facts against the faith due to the testimonies that attest them, and even in some cases against the apparent evidence of our own senses, enters largely and essentially into the composition of that philosophical spirit or temper which so strongly distinguishes the eighteenth century.



BERKELEY.

[BORN 1684. DIED 1753.]

DUGALD STEWART.

WITH his intellectual and moral endowments, admired and emblazoned as they were by the most distinguished wits of his age, it is not surprising that Berkeley should have given a popularity and fashion to metaphysical pursuits which they had never before acquired in England. Nor was this popularity diminished by the boldness of some of his paradoxes; on the contrary, it was in no small degree the effect of them, the great bulk of mankind being always prone to mistake a singularity or eccentricity of thinking for the originality of a native genius. The solid additions, however, made by Berkeley to the stock of human knowledge were important and brilliant. 'Among these, the first place is unquestionably due to his new theory of vision, a work abounding with ideas so different from those commonly received, and at the same time so profound and refined, that it was regarded, by all but a few accustomed to deep metaphysical reflection, rather in the light of a philosophical romance than of a sober inquiry after truth. Such, however, has been since, the progress and diffusion of this sort of knowledge, that the leading and most abstracted doctrines contained in it, form now an essential part of every

elementary treatise of optics, and are adopted by the most superficial smatterers in science as fundamental articles of their faith.

In bestowing the praise of originality on Berkeley's theory of vision, I do not mean to say that the whole merit of this theory is exclusively his own. In this, as in most other cases, it may be presumed that the progress of the human mind is gradual, and, in point of fact, it will on examination be found that Berkeley only took up the inquiry where Locke dropped it, following out his principles to their remoter consequences, and placing them in so great a variety of strong and happy lights, as to bring a doctrine, till then understood but by a few, within the reach of every intelligent and attentive reader. For my own part, on comparing these two philosophers together, I am at a loss whether most to admire the powerful and penetrating sagacity of the one, or the fertility of invention displayed in the illustrations of the other.

Next in point of importance to Berkeley's new theory of vision, which I regard as by far the most solid basis of his philosophical fame, may be ranked his speculations concerning the objects of general terms, and his celebrated argument against the existence of the material world. In neither instance are his reasonings so entirely original as has been commonly supposed. In the former, they coincide in substance, although with immense improvements in the form, with those of the scholastic nominalists, as revised and modified by Hobbes and Leibnitz. In the latter instance, they amount to little more than an ingenious and elegant development of some principles of Malebranche pushed to certain paradoxical but obvious consequences, of which Malebranche, though unwilling to avow them, appears to

have been fully aware. These consequences, too, had been previously pointed out by Mr Norris, a very learned divine of the Church of England, whose name has unaccountably failed in attaining that distinction to which his acuteness as a logician, and his boldness as a theorist, justly entitled him.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

[BORN 1706. DIED 1790.]

JEFFREY.

THIS self-taught American is the most rational, perhaps, of all philosophers. He never loses sight of common sense in any of his speculations; and when his philosophy does not consist entirely in its fair and vigorous application, it is always regulated and confronted by it in its application and result. No individual, perhaps, ever possessed a juster understanding, or was so seldom obstructed in the use of it by indolence, enthusiasm, or authority. Dr Franklin received no regular education, and he spent the greater part of his life in a society where there was no relish and no encouragement for literature. On an ordinary mind, these circumstances would have produced their usual effects of repressing all sorts of intellectual ambition or activity, and perpetuating a generation of incurious mechanics; but, to an understanding like Franklin's, we cannot help considering them as peculiarly propitious, and imagine that we can trace back to them distinctly almost all the peculiarities of his intellectual character.

We are disposed to ascribe so much power to these obstructions to intellectual originality, that we cannot help fancying that, if Franklin had been bred in a college, he would have contented himself with expounding the metres of Pindar, and mixing argument with his Port in the common room; and that if Boston had abounded with men of

letters, he would never have ventured to come forth from his printing-house, or been driven back to it, at any rate, by the sneers of the critics, after the first publication of his essays in the "Busy-Body."

Franklin's conclusions were often rash and inaccurate, from the same circumstances which rendered his productions concise. Philosophy and speculation did not form the business of his life, nor did he dedicate himself to any particular study with the view to exhaust and complete the investigation of it in all its parts, and under all its relations. He engaged in every interesting question that suggested itself to him, rather as the necessary exercise of a powerful and active mind, than as a task which he had bound himself to perform. He cast a quick and penetrating eye over the facts and the data that were presented to him, and drew his conclusions with a rapidity and precision that have not often been equalled. But he did not generally stop to examine the completeness of the data upon which he proceeded, nor to consider the ultimate effect or application of the principles to which he had been conducted. In all questions, therefore, where the facts upon which he was to determine, and the materials from which his judgment was to be formed, were either few in number, or of such a nature as not to be overlooked, his reasonings are for the most part perfectly just and conclusive, and his decisions unexceptionably sound; but where the elements of the calculation were more numerous or widely scattered, it appears to us that he has often been precipitate, and that he has either been misled by a partial apprehension of the conditions of the problem, or has discovered only a portion of the truth that lay before him.

In writings which possess such solid and unusual merit, it

is of no great consequence that the fastidious eye of a critic can discover many blemishes. There is a good deal of vulgarity in the practical writings of Dr Franklin, and more vulgarity than was necessary for the object he had in view. There is something childish, too, at some of his attempts at pleasantry. His story of the whistle, and his Parisian letter, announcing the discovery that the sun gives light as soon as he rises, are instances of this. The soliloquy of an ephemeris, however, is much better; and both it and the dialogue with the gout are executed with the lightness and spirit of genuine French compositions. The speech in the Divan of Algiers, composed as a parody of the defenders of the slave trade, and the scriptural parable against persecution, are inimitable; they have all the point and facility of the fine pleasantries of Swift and Arbuthnot, with something more of directness and apparent sincerity.

Upon the whole, we look upon the life and writings of Dr Franklin as affording a striking illustration of the incalculable value of a sound and well directed understanding, and of the comparative uselessness of learning and laborious accomplishments. Without the slightest pretensions to the character of a scholar or a man of science, he has extended the boundary of human knowledge on a variety of subjects which scholars and men of science had previously investigated without success; and has only been found deficient in those studies which the learned have generally turned from in disdain. We would not be understood to say anything in disparagement of scholarship and science; but the value of these instruments is apt to be overrated by their possessors, and it is a wholesome mortification to show them that the work may be done without them. We have long known that their employment does not secure its success.

JAMES WATT.

[BORN 1736. DIED 1819.]

JEFFREY.

THIS name needs no commemoration of ours, for he that bore it survived to see it crowned with undisputed and unenvied honours; and many generations will probably pass away before it shall have gathered "all its fame." We have said that Mr Watt was the great improver of the steam-engine; but, in truth, as to all that is admirable in its structure or vast in its utility, he should rather be described as its inventor. It was by his invention that its action was so regulated as to make it capable of being applied to the finest and most delicate manufactures, and its power so increased as to set weight and solidity at defiance. By his admirable contrivance, it has become a thing stupendous alike for its force and flexibility, for the prodigious power which it can exert, and the ease and precision and ductility with which that power can be varied, distributed, and applied. The trunk of an elephant that can pick up a pin or rend an oak is as nothing to it. It can engrave a seal, and crush masses of obdurate metal before it; draw out, without breaking, a thread as fine as gossamer; and lift a ship-of-war like a bauble in the air. It can embroider muslin and forge anchors cut steel into rib-

bons, and impel loaded vessels against the fury of the winds and waves.

It would be difficult to estimate the value of the benefits which these inventions have conferred upon the country. There is no branch of industry that has not been indebted to them; and in all the most material, they have not only widened most magnificently the field of its exertions, but multiplied a thousandfold the amount of its productions. It was our matured steam-engine, in short, that fought the battles of Europe, and exalted and sustained, through the late tremendous contest, the political greatness of our land. It is the same great power which now enables us to pay the interest of our debt, and to maintain the arduous struggle in which we are still engaged [1819], with the skill and capital of countries less oppressed with taxation. But these are poor and narrow views of its importance. It has increased indefinitely the mass of human comforts and enjoyments, and rendered cheap and accessible all over the world the materials of wealth and prosperity. It has armed the feeble hand of man, in short, with a power to which no limits can be assigned, completed the dominion of mind over the most refractory qualities of matter, and laid a sure foundation for all those future miracles of mechanical power which are to aid and reward the labours of after-generations. It is to the genius of one man, too, that all this is mainly owing, and certainly no man ever bestowed such a gift on his kind.

Independently of his great attainments in mechanics, Mr Watt was an extraordinary, and, in many respects, a wonderful man. Perhaps no individual of his age possessed so much and such varied and exact information, had read so much, or remembered what he had read so accurately and well. He had infinite quickness of apprehension, a prodi-

gious memory, and a certain rectifying and methodising power of understanding, which extracted something precious out of all that was presented to it. His stores of miscellaneous knowledge were immense, and yet less astonishing than the command he had at all times over them. It seemed as if every subject that was casually started in conversation with him had been that which he had been last occupied in studying and exhausting—such was the copiousness, the precision, and the admirable clearness of the information which he poured out upon it without effort or hesitation. Nor was this promptitude and compass of knowledge confined in any degree to the studies connected with his ordinary pursuits. That he should have been minutely and extensively skilled in chemistry and the arts, and in most of the branches of physical science, might perhaps have been conjectured; but it could not have been inferred from his usual avocations, and probably is not generally known, that he was curiously learned in many branches of antiquity, metaphysics, medicine, and etymology, and perfectly at home in all the details of architecture, music, and law. He was well acquainted, too, with most of the modern languages, and familiar with their most recent literature. Nor was it at all extraordinary to hear the great mechanician and engineer detailing and expounding, for hours together, the metaphysical theories of the German logicians, or criticising the measures or the matter of the German poetry.

His astonishing memory was aided, no doubt, in a great measure by a still higher and rarer faculty, by his power of digesting and arranging in its proper place all the information he received, and casting aside and rejecting, as it were instinctively, whatever was worthless or immaterial. Every conception that was suggested to his mind seemed instinctively

to take its proper place among its other rich furniture, and to be condensed into the smallest and most convenient form. He never appeared, therefore, to be at all encumbered or perplexed with the verbiage of the dull books he perused, or the idle talk to which he listened, but to have at once extracted, by a kind of intellectual alchemy, all that was worthy of attention, and to have reduced it, for his own use, to its true value and to its simplest form.

LA PLACE.

[BORN 1749. DIED 1827.]

PLAYFAIR.

ADAM SMITH, in his History of Astronomy, says: "That which would appear to be the most above human reason and experience, is the attempt to compute the weights and densities of the sun and the several planets." What would this philosopher have said if he had lived to see the same balance in which the vast body of the sun had been weighed, applied to examine such minute atoms as the satellites of Jupiter? Of such [and other inquiries] is the work of La Place, affording an example, which is yet solitary in the history of human knowledge, of a theory entirely complete, one that has not only accounted for all the phenomena that were known, but that has discovered many more unknown, which observation has since recognised. In this theory, not only the elliptic motions of the planets relative to the sun, but the irregularities produced by their mutual action,—whether of the primary on the primary, of the primary on the secondary, or of the secondary on one another,—are all deduced from the principle of gravitation, that mysterious power which unites the most distant regions of space and the most remote periods of duration. To this we must add the great truths brought in view,

and fully demonstrated, by tracing the action of the same power through all its mazes: that all the inequalities in our system are periodical; that by a fixed appointment in nature they are each destined to revolve in the same order and between the same limits; that the mean distances of the planets from the sun, and the time of their revolution round that body, are susceptible of no change whatsoever; that our system is thus secured against natural decay; order and regularity preserved in the midst of so many disturbing causes, and anarchy and misrule eternally proscribed.

The work ["Mechanique Celeste"] where this sublime picture is delineated does honour not to the author only, but to the human race, and marks undoubtedly the highest point to which man has yet ascended in the scale of intellectual attainment. The glory, therefore, of having produced this work belongs not to the author alone, but must be shared in various proportions among the mathematicians and philosophers of all ages. Their efforts, from the age of Euclid and Archimedes to the time of Newton and La Place, have all been required to the accomplishment of this great object; they have been all necessary to form one man for the author, and a few for the readers of the work before us. Every mathematician who has extended the bounds of his science; every astronomer who has added to the number of facts and the accuracy of observation; every artist who has improved the construction of the instruments of astronomy —all have co-operated in preparing a state of knowledge in which such a book could exist, and in which its merit could be appreciated. They have collected the materials, sharpened the tools, or constructed the engines employed in the great edifice founded by Newton and completed by La Place. In this estimate we detract nothing from the merit

of the author himself; his originality, his invention, and comprehensive views are above all praise; nor can any man boast of a higher honour, than *that the genius of the human race is the only rival of his fame.*



Poets and Dramatists.

HOMER.

[BORN B.C. 962. DIED B.C. 927.]

POPE.

HOMER is universally allowed to have had the greatest invention of any writer whatever. The praise of judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, and others may have their pretensions to particular excellences, but his invention remains as yet unrivalled. Nor is it a wonder if he has ever been acknowledged as the greatest of poets who most excelled in that which is the very foundation of poetry. It is the invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great geniuses; the utmost strength of human study, learning, and industry, which masters every thing besides, can never attain to this. It furnishes art with all her materials, and without it judgment itself can at best but "steal wisely;" for art is only like a prudent steward that lives on managing the riches of nature. Whatever praises may be given to works of judgment, there is not even a single beauty in them to which the invention must not contribute, as in the most regular gardens art can only

reduce the beauties of nature to more regularity, and such a figure which the common eye can better take in, and is therefore more entertained with. And perhaps the reason why common critics are inclined to prefer a judicial and methodical genius to a great and fruitful one is, because they find it easier for themselves to pursue their observations through a uniform and unbounded walk, than to comprehend the vast and varied extent of nature.

Our author's work ["Iliad"] is a wild paradise, where, if we cannot see all the beauties distinctly, as in an ordered garden, it is only because the number of them is infinitely greater. It is like a copious nursery which contains the seeds and first productions of every kind, out of which those who followed him have but selected some particular plants, each according to his fancy, to cultivate and beautify. If some things are too luxuriant, it is owing to the riches of the soil; and if others are not arrived to perfection or maturity, it is only because they are overrun and oppressed by those of a stronger nature.

It is to the strength of this amazing invention we are to attribute the unequalled fire and rapture, which is so forcible in Homer, that no man of a true poetical spirit is master of himself while he reads him. What he writes is of the most animated nature imaginable, every thing moves, every thing lives, and is put in action. If a council be called, or a battle fought, you are not coldly informed of what was said or done, as from a third person; the reader is hurried out of himself by the force of the poet's imagination, and turns in one place to a hearer, in another to a spectator. The course of his verses resembles that of the army he describes: "They pour along like a fire, which sweeps the whole earth before it." It is, however, remarkable, that his fancy, which is

everywhere vigorous, is not discovered immediately at the beginning of his poem in its fullest splendour; it grows in the progress both on himself and others, and becomes on fire, like a chariot-wheel, by its own rapidity. Exact disposition, just thought, correct elocution, polished numbers, may have been found in a thousand; but this poetic fire, this *vivida vis animi*, in a very few. Even in works where all these are imperfect or neglected, this can overpower criticism, and make us admire even when we disapprove. Nay, where this appears, though attended with absurdities, it brightens all the rubbish about it till we see nothing but its own splendour. This fire is discerned in Virgil, but discerned as through a glass reflected from Homer, more shining than fierce, but everywhere equal and constant: in Lucan and Statius it bursts out in sudden, short, and interrupted flashes: in Milton it glows like a furnace, kept up to an uncommon ardour by the force of art: in Shakespeare it strikes before we are aware, like an accidental fire from heaven; but in Homer, and in him only, it burns everywhere clearly, and everywhere irresistibly.

This strong and ruling faculty was like a powerful star, which, in the violence of its course, drew all things within its vortex.* It seemed not enough to have taken in the whole circle of arts, and the whole compass of nature, to supply his maxims and reflections; all the inward passions and affections of mankind to furnish his character; and all the outward forms and images of things for his descriptions; but, wanting yet an ampler sphere to expatiate in, he opened a new and boundless walk for his imagination, and created a world for himself in the invention of fable. That which Aristotle calls "the soul of poetry," was first breathed into it by Homer.

VIRGIL.

[BORN B.C. 70. DIED B.C 19.]

PROFESSOR SPALDING.

VIRGIL possessed neither Horace's sagacity of observation, nor his lively interest in contemporary life and political relations. He was wholly the poet and the artist, endowed with all the qualifications of the latter character, and with many of the most exquisite gifts of the former. As a poet, every feature of his genius is subservient to one leading faculty,—his unequalled sense of beauty, clear, delicate, and ideal, which attuned the flow of his verse, ministered to his felicity of language, and dictated the themes on which his delighted fancy retired to repose itself. Primeval simplicity and grandeur; pastoral life amidst the luxuriance of rural nature; heroic adventure, seen through the mist of time, and antique worth exalted into calm greatness by imagination, were the elements of the world in which his thoughts dwelt; and the purposes to which he turned these favourite visions were equally well chosen for creating his fame among his contemporaries, and for preserving it for posterity.

His Idyls—examples of an ill-invented species of poetry, an illegitimate drama, to which no degree of skill can give much interest—were early attempts; and, though works of high promise, they have much of the false Alexandrian taste,

and develop but imperfectly Virgil's higher qualities. His greatest work was commenced in the fortieth year of his age, and had not received his last corrections when he died at Brandusium, in his fifty-second. Politically considered, the legendary story which the "Æneid" tells was in itself perfectly harmless to the new dynasty, and it may perhaps have been thought that it would even be useful in the foreign provinces, by magnifying the original greatness of Italy and Rome. A considerable portion of his historical details and a little of his supernatural machinery are native to the soil, though their features are kept in studied subordination to the foreign outline. For some of the most lovely scenes of his beautiful country, Virgil, in this poem, did the same service which Scott has performed for so many places in Scotland.

It would be an intrusion to enter into minute criticism on the merit of the work, in respect either to its plan or its most prominent details. With no variety, and little force of character; with a hero, about whose fate we remain perfectly indifferent, if indeed we do not rather wish success to his enemies; with a tone of moral feeling which scarcely ever rises above decent worldliness, and sometimes sinks below it; with a story whose baldness is only relieved by a few episodical tales, which, though exquisitely pathetic, are really excrescences on its design: with all these defects, and many more, the "Æneid" has always charmed, and will always continue to charm, every one who has a heart and fancy for the feeling and imagery of poetry, an ear for its most delightful melody, or an intellect qualified to appreciate the symmetry and perfection of its art.

DANTE.

[BORN 1265. DIED 1321.]

SISMONDI.

NO poet had yet arisen gifted with absolute power over the empire of the soul, no philosopher had yet pierced into the depths of feeling and of thought, when Dante, the greatest name of Italy, and the father of her poetry, appeared and demonstrated the mightiness of his genius, by availing himself of the rude and imperfect materials within his reach to construct an edifice resembling in magnitude that universe whose image it reflects. Instead of amatory effusions addressed to an imaginary beauty, — instead of madrigals full of sprightly insipidity, sonnets laboured into harmony, and strained and discordant allegories,—the only models, in any modern language, which presented themselves to the notice of Dante, that great genius conceived in his vast imagination the mysteries of the invisible creation, and unveiled them to the eyes of the astonished world.

The glory which Dante acquired, which commenced during his lifetime, and which raised him in a little time above the greatest names of Italy, contributed but little to his happiness. He was born in Florence in 1265, of the noble and distinguished family of the Alligieri, which was attached in politics to the party of the Guelphs. While yet very young, he formed a strong attachment to Beatrice, the daughter of

Folco de Portinari, whom he lost at the age of twenty-five years. Throughout his future life he preserved a faithful recollection of the passion which, during fifteen years, had essentially contributed to the happy development of his feelings, and which was thus associated with all his noble sentiments and his most elevated thoughts. It was probably about ten years after the death of Beatrice when Dante commenced his great work, which occupied him during the remainder of his life, and in which he assigned the most conspicuous station to the woman he had so tenderly loved. In this object of his adoration he found a common point of union for images, both human and divine; and the Beatrice of his Paradise appears to us sometimes in the character of the most beloved of her sex, and sometimes as an abstract emblem of celestial wisdom. Far from considering the passion of love in the same light as the ancients, the father of modern poetry recognised it as a pure, elevated, and sacred sentiment, calculated to ennoble and sanctify the soul; and he has never been surpassed by any who have succeeded him, in his entire and affecting devotion to the object of his attachment.

A proof of the superiority of this great genius may be drawn from the commentaries upon his works. We are there surprised to see his most enthusiastic admirers incapable of appreciating his real grandeur. Dante himself, in his later treatise, intitled "De Vulgari Eloquentia," appears to be quite unconscious of the extent of his services to the literature of his country. Like his commentators, he principally values himself upon the purity and correctness of his style. Yet he is neither pure nor correct; but, what is far superior to either, he had the powers of creative invention. For the sake of the rhyme, we find him employing a great number of barbarous words, which do not occur a second time

in his verses. But when he is himself affected, and wishes to communicate his emotions, the Italian language of the thirteenth century, in his powerful hands, displays a richness of expression, a purity and an elegance, which he was the first to elicit, and by which it has ever since been distinguished. The personages whom he introduces are moving, breathing beings; his pictures are nature herself; his language speaks at once to the imagination and the judgment; and it would be difficult to point out a passage in his poem which would not form a subject for the pencil. The admiration of his commentators has also been abundantly bestowed upon the profound learning of Dante, who, it must be allowed, appears to have been master of all the knowledge and accomplishments of the age in which he lived. Of these attainments, his poem is the faithful depository, from which we may infer, with great precision, the progress which science had at that time made, and the advances which were yet necessary to afford satisfaction to the mind.



PETRARCH.

[BORN 1304. DIED 1374.]

PROFESSOR SPALDING.

BORN at Arezzo in Tuscany, educated at Avignon and Montpelier, and then sent to study law at Bologna. Though Petrarch certainly loved the "Æneid" more than the Pandects, and copied ancient MS. more willingly than law-papers, yet the subsequent course of his public life proves that he did not neglect professional pursuits, and that he prepared himself for being a useful man of business. Returning to Avignon soon after he became of age, he found himself in possession of a small inheritance, and indulged for some years in an alternation of classical studies and poetical composition, with such gaiety as the clerical court offered. In the year 1327 he conceived his attachment to an Avignonese lady, young, but already married. His attentions to her were treated much as a manner of course; the admirer was never admitted even to the most innocent stage of modern Cicisbeism. There appears to have been at no time much intercourse between the parties; and we do not know with certainty so much as the lady's real name. She became famous in her lifetime, and is still celebrated as the Laura of the verses in which Petrarch sung her praises; but his passion does seem to have been little more than a flight of imaginative sentiment,

remarkable only for the length of its endurance, and for the genius of the person by whom it was entertained. About 1338 he retired for two or three years to dwell in the beautiful valley of Vaucluse, near Avignon. He himself said that his withdrawal to the retreat which he immortalised was caused by no reason more sentimental or poetic than his disgust with the licentiousness of the Papal court, and the disappointment of the hopes of preferment which the Pope had held out to him. Long before this time his talents and accomplishments had procured for him not only distinguished patronage, but frequent and active employment. He now speedily quitted Vaucluse for Italy. In 1370, when his health was already failing through attacks of palsy and epilepsy, he left Padua for the neighbouring village of Arqua, seated among the lovely Euganean hills. There he built a house, still preserved, but he was hardly ever free from illness till his death in 1374. Petrarch, whose life was thus active, is immortal in the history of literature, in virtue of more claims than one. He is placed as one of the most celebrated of poets in right of his "Rime"—that is, verses in the modern Italian tongue, of which he was one of the earliest cultivators and refiners. Celebrating in these his visionary love, he modelled the Italian sonnet, and gave to it and to other forms of lyrical poetry not only an admirable polish of diction and melody, but a delicacy of poetic feeling which has hardly ever been equalled, and a play of rich fancy which, if it often degenerates into false wit, is as often delightfully and purely beautiful. But though Petrarch's Sonnets, and Canzoni, and "Triumphs," could all be forgotten, he would still be honoured as one of the benefactors of European civilisation. No one but Boccaccio shares with him the glory of having been the chief restorer of classical

learning. He was himself a voluminous Latin writer, both in prose and verse; and his fame as a poet in his own day, and his coronation in the Roman capital in 1341, rested on his celebration of the second Punic war in his epic poem, "Africa."



CHAUCER.

[BORN 1328. DIED 1400.]

HAZLITT.

THE most practical of all the great poets, the most of a man of business and the world, his poetry reads like history. Every thing has a downright reality, at least in the relator's mind; a simile, or a sentiment, is as if it were given upon evidence. Thus he describes Cressid's first avowal of her love :—

> "And as the new, abashed nightingale,
> That stinteth first when she beginneth sing,
> When that she heareth any herde's tale;
> Or in the hedges any wights stirring;
> And after sicker doth her voice outring.
> Right so did Cresseide when that her dread stent
> Opened her heart, and told him her intent."

This is so true, and natural, and beautifully simple, that the two things seem identified with each other. He is contented to find truth, and beauty in truth. He exhibits for the most part the naked object, with little drapery thrown over it. His metaphors, which are few, are not for ornament, but ascend as like as possible to the things themselves. He does not affect to show his power over the reader's mind, but the power which the subject has over his

own. The readers of Chaucer's poetry feel more nearly what the persons he describes must have felt, than perhaps those of any other poet. His sentiments are not voluntary effusions of the poet's fancy, but founded on the natural impulses and habitual prejudices of the characters he has to represent. There is an inveteracy of purpose, a sincerity of feeling, which never relaxes or grows vapid in whatever they do or say.

Chaucer's poetry resembles the root just springing from the ground, rather than the full-blown flower. His muse is no "babbling gossip of the air," fluent and redundant; but, like a stammerer, or dumb person, that has just found the use of speech, crowds many things together with eager haste, with anxious pauses and fond repetitions to prevent mistakes. His words point as an index to the objects, like the eye or the finger. There were none of the commonplaces of diction in our author's time; no reflected lights of fancy, no borrowed roseate tints; he was obliged to inspect things for himself; to look narrowly, and almost to handle the object, as in the obscurity of morning we partly see and partly grope our way; so that his descriptions have a sort of tangible character belonging to them, and produce the effect of sculpture on the mind. Chaucer had an equal eye for truth of nature and discrimination of character, and his interest in what he saw gave new distinctness and force to his power of observation. The picturesque and dramatic are in him closely blended together, and hardly distinguishable, for he principally describes external appearances as indicating character, as symbols of internal sentiment. There is a meaning in what he sees, and it is this which catches his eye by sympathy. Thus, the costume and dress of the Canterbury Pilgrims—of the knight, the squire, the

Oxford scholar, and the gap-toothed wife of Bath, and the rest, speak for themselves. The sergeant-at-law is the same identical individual as Lawyer Dowling in "Tom Jones," who wished to divide himself into a hundred pieces, to be in a hundred places at once.

> "No wher so besy a man as he there n'as,
> And yet he seemed besier than he was."

The frankelein, "in whose mouth it snewed of mete and drink;" the shopman, "who rode upon a rouncie as he couth;" the doctor of phisike, "whose studie was but little of the Bible;" the wif of Bath, the poure person of a town, "whose parish was wide, and houses fer asunder;" the miller and the reve, "a slender, colerike man," are all of the same stamp.



ARIOSTO.

[BORN 1474. DIED 1533.]

SISMONDI.

BORN in 1474 at Reggio, of which place his father was governor. He wrote his "Orlando Furioso" in 1505. He read his cantos as they were finished to his friends and to persons of taste in Ferrara, and he paid a particular attention to their criticisms, in order to polish and perfect his style. Before the year 1532, four editions had appeared. Alphonso I. received him into his service, and gave him an employment under the government. Ariosto was commissioned to suppress the banditti of the Garfagnana; and we are assured that amidst those lawless men his poetical fame preceded him, and served as a passport. The Duke of Ferrara gave him at length an appointment more congenial to his taste—that of superintending the erection of a theatre, and directing the magnificent representations which he intended to give. Ariosto employed in this manner the last years of his life. The "Orlando Furioso" of Ariosto is a poem universally known. It has been translated into all the modern languages, and by the sole charm of its adventures, independently of its poetry, has long been the delight of the youth of all countries. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that Ariosto undertook to sing the Paladins and their amours at the court of Charlemagne dur-

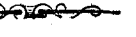
ing the fabulous wars of this monarch against the Moors. Every reader knows that Orlando, of all the heroes of Ariosto the most renowned for his valour, went mad through love for Angelica, and that his madness, which is only an episode of this long poem, has given its name to the whole of the composition, although it is not till the 23d canto that Orlando is deprived of his senses.

The poem of Ariosto is, therefore, only a fragment of the history of the knights of Charlemagne and their amours, and it has neither beginning nor end further than any particular detached period may be said to possess them. This want of unity essentially injures the interest and the general impression we ought to derive from the work. But the avidity with which all nations and all ages have read Ariosto, even when his story is despoiled of its poetic charms by translation, sufficiently proves that he had the art of giving to its individual parts an interest which it does not possess as a whole. Above all, he has communicated to it a spirit of valour. In spite of the habitual obscurity of those chivalrous combats,—in spite of the disproportion of the causes with their effects, and the raillery which seems inseparable from the narration of his battles,—Ariosto always contrives to excite in us an enthusiasm and an intoxication of valour which create a love of enterprise in every reader. One of the most exalted enjoyments of man consists in the full development of his energies and power. The great art of the poet of romance is to awaken a proper confidence in our own resources, by raising against his hero all the forces of nature and the spells of magic, and by exhibiting him as triumphant, by the superiority of his will and courage, over all the powers which had conspired his ruin.

The supernatural agency which Ariosto employs is divested

of all terror. It is a brilliant heightening of the energies of man which embodies the dreams of the imagination; the development of the passions of the living, not the unnatural apparition of the dead. The genii of the east, whom the most ancient fables have represented as subservient to the Ring of Solomon, are the prototypes of the fairies of the north. Their power is exercised, as in the Arabian fables, in splendid creations, in a taste for the arts, and in a love of pleasure. In short, Alcina Atlas, the Ring of Angelina, and the Hippogriff, are the creations of Islamism; whilst the evil spirit of the mountain and the spectre of the castle, who shakes his fetters and disturbs the hour of repose by his frightful visits, are European superstitions allied to Christianity, and to the mythology of Scandinavia and Germany.

But if Ariosto was not the inventor of the mythology he has employed, nor of the heroes whom he has introduced, he has not the less exhibited in his poem the most brilliant imagination and the most fertile invention. Each of his knights has his own story, and each of these stories forms a tissue of agreeable adventures, which awake the curiosity, and often excite the liveliest interest. Many of these adventures have furnished excellent dramatic subjects to succeeding poets; and the loves of Angelica and Medoro, those of Bradamante and Ruggiero, and of Genevra of Scotland and Ariodante, form a world of traditionary poetry not less fruitful than that of the Greeks.



SPENSER.

[BORN 1553. DIED 1599.]

HAZLITT.

OF all the poets this is the most poetical. Though much later than Chaucer, his obligations to preceding writers were less. He has in some measure borrowed the plan of his poem (as a number of distinct narratives) from Ariosto; but he has engrafted upon it an exuberance of fancy and an endless voluptuousness of sentiment, which are not to be found in the Italian writer. Further, Spenser is even more of an inventor in the subject-matter. There is an originality, richness, and variety in his allegorical personages and pictures which almost vies with the splendour of the ancient mythology. If Ariosto transports us into the regions of romance, Spenser's poetry is all fairy land. In Ariosto we walk upon the ground in company, gay, fantastic, and adventurous enough. In Spenser we wander in another world among ideal beings. The poet takes and lays us in the lap of a lovelier nature, by the sound of softer streams, among greener hills and fairer valleys. He paints nature, not as we find it, but as we expect to find it, and fulfils the delightful promise of our youth. He waves his wand of enchantment, and at once embodies airy beings, and throws a delicious veil over all actual objects. The two worlds of reality and fiction are poised on the wings of his imagination. His ideas, indeed, seem

more distinct than his perceptions. He is the painter of abstractions, and describes them with dazzling minuteness. In the mask of Cupid he makes the god of Love "clap on high his coloured winges twain;" and it is said of Gluttony, in the Procession of the Passions—

"In green vine leaves he was right fitly clad."

At times he becomes picturesque from his intense love of beauty, as where he compares Prince Arthur's crest to the appearance of the almond tree—

"Upon the top of all his lofty crest,
A bunch of hairs discoloured diversely,
With sprinkled pearl and gold full richly drest,
Did shake and seemed to dance for jollity,
Like to an almond tree ymounted high
On top of green Selenis, all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily;
Her tender locks do tremble every one
At every little breath that under heaven is blown."

The love of beauty, however, and not of truth, is the moving principle of his mind, and he is guided in his fantastic delineations by no rule but the impulse of an inexhaustible imagination. He luxuriates equally in scenes of eastern magnificence, or the still solitude of a hermit's cell—in the extremes of sensuality or refinement.

In reading the "Faery Queen" you see a little, withered, old man by a woodside opening a wicket; a giant and a dwarf lagging far behind; a damsel in a boat upon an enchanted lake; wood-nymphs and satyrs; and all of a sudden you are transported into a lofty palace, with tapers burning, amidst knights and ladies, with dance and revelry, and

song and mask, and antique pageantry. What can be more solitary, more shut up in itself, than his description of the house of sleep, to which Archimago sends for a dream—

> "And more to lull him in his slumber soft,
> A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
> And ever drizzling rain upon the loft
> Mixed with a murmuring wind, much like the sound
> Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swound;
> No other noise, nor people's troublous cries,
> That still are wont t' annoy the walled town
> Might there be heard; but careless, quiet, lies
> Wrapt in eternal silence, far from enemies."

It is as if "the honey-dew of slumber" had settled on his pen in writing these lines. How different is the subject (and yet how like in beauty) is the description of the Bower of Bliss.

The finest things in Spenser are the character of Una, in the First Book; the House of Pride; the Cave of Mammon, and the Cave of Despair; the account of Memory, of whom it is said—

> "The wars he well remembered of King Nine,
> Of old Assaracus and Inachus divine;"

the description of Belphalie; the story of Florimel and the Witch's Son; the Gardens of Adonis, and the Bower of Bliss; the Mask of Cupid, and Colin Clout's Vision, in the Last Book. But some people may say that all this may be very fine, but that they cannot understand it on account of the allegory. They are afraid of the allegory, as if they thought it would bite them; they look at it as a child looks on a painted dragon, and think it will strangle them in its shining folds. This is very idle. If they do not meddle with the allegory, the allegory will not meddle with them.

TASSO.

[BORN 1544. DIED 1595.]

SISMONDI.

WHILST men of the first reputation in Italy failed in the gigantic enterprise of producing an epic poem, a young man of twenty-one years of age, scarcely known by a romantic poem called "Rinaldo," commenced writing, at the court of Ferrara, whither he had been lately invited, that "Jerusalem Delivered," which has placed its author by the side of Homer and Virgil, and has elevated him, perhaps, above all modern poets. Torquato Tasso, whose misfortunes equalled his glory, devoted sixteen years to the composition of this poem, of which seven editions appeared in the same year, 1581, almost all without the concurrence of the author. The merit of Tasso consists in his having chosen the most engaging subject that could have inspired a modern poet. History presents us with the remarkable fact of a mighty contest between the people, who were destined to exalt the human race to its highest point of civilisation, and those who would have reduced it to the greatest barbarism. This was the struggle between the Christians and the Saracens during the wars of the Crusades.

These two races of men, when they combated seven cen-

turies ago, could not foresee the important consequences which Providence attached to their efforts. But a motive not less noble, not less interested, and still more poetical, directed their arms—a religious faith connected their salvation with their valour. The Saracens considered themselves called on to subjugate the earth to the faith of Mahomet; the Christians to enfranchise the sacred spot where their Divine Founder suffered death, and the mysteries of redemption were accomplished. The religion of that age was wholly warlike; and it was a profound, disinterested, and enthusiastic sentiment which led our ancestors to bid adieu to their wives and children to traverse unknown seas, and to brave a thousand deaths in a foreign land. This sentiment was highly poetical—self-devotion, and confidence in heaven, form heroes; and, accordingly, we never at any period behold so brilliant a display of valour. Superstition arose out of the very circumstances of the times. Those who wholly devoted themselves to the service of God might expect that God would interfere in their favour, and in this interference they reposed.

"Eh! quel temps fut jamais plus fertile en miracles."

The whole history of the Crusades, indeed, abounds in miracles. The assistance of God was invoked before battle; His arm was visible in their deliverance; His rod chastened them in defeat; and marvels were so very prevalent that the supernatural seemed to usurp the laws of nature and the common course of events. The Mahommedans, on their side, relied also on Divine protection. They invoked, in their mosques, with no less confidence, the great defender of their faith; and they attributed to his power and to his

angels their victories and their disasters. The prodigies which each party boasted to have seen performed on their behalf were not denied by their enemies; but as each believed themselves worshippers of the true God, so each attributed to the power of evil spirits the occasional success of their opponents. The faith against which the Crusaders fought appeared to them the worship of the powers of hell. They easily believed that a contest might exist between invisible beings, as between different nations upon earth; and when Tasso armed the dark powers of enchantment against the Christian knights, he only developed and embellished a popular idea, for the adoption of which our education, our prejudices, and all our ancient traditions have prepared us.

The whole course of the poem is truly epic. It is entire, simple, and grand, and ends, as it commenced, with dignity. It opens in the plains of Tortosa. The Deity himself calls the Crusaders to arms. One of His angels appears to the pious Godfrey of Boulogne, reproaches the Christians with supineness, promises himself victory, and announces to him the decrees of God, who has elected him leader of the sacred host. Godfrey instantly assembles his companions-in-arms. On the other side, the Emir, lieutenant of the Sultan of Egypt, whom Tasso has named Aladin, King of Jerusalem, prepares himself for defence. Then the fight goes on.

We have admired in Tasso the antique cast of his poem, and that beauty which results from the unity and regularity of design, and from the harmony of all its parts. But this merit,—the principal one, perhaps, in our eyes,—is not that which has rendered his plot so popular. It is its romantic form which harmonises with the sentiments, the passions,

and recollections of Europeans. It is because he celebrates heroes whose type exists in their hearts, that he is celebrated in turn by the gondoliers of Venice, that a whole people cherish his memory, and that in the nights of summer the mariners interchange the sorrows of Eminia and the death of Clarinda.

LOPE DE VEGA.

[BORN 1562. DIED 1635.]

SISMONDI.

LOPE FELIX DE VEGA CARPIO was born fifteen years after Cervantes. The death of two wives determined him to renounce the world and enter into orders. Notwithstanding this change, he continued to the end of his life to cultivate poetry with so wonderful a facility, that a drama of more than 2000 lines, intermingled with sonnets, *terza rima*, and *ottava rima*, and enlivened with all kinds of unexpected incidents and intrigues, frequently cost him no more than the labour of a single day. He tells us himself that he has produced more than a hundred plays, which were represented within twenty-four hours after their first conception. We must not forget the wonderful facility of the Italian improvisatori, and it is not more difficult to compose in the Spanish metres. In the time of Lope de Vega there existed many Castilian improvisatori, who expressed themselves in verse with the same ease as in prose. Lope was the most remarkable of those improvisatori, for the task of versification seemed never to have retarded his progress. His friend and biographer, Montalvan, remarks that he composed more rapidly than his amanuensis could copy. The managers of the theatres, who always kept him on the spur, left him no time either to

read or correct his compositions. He thus, with inconceivable facility, produced 1800 comedies, and 400 *autos sacramentales;* in all, 2200 dramas, of which about 300 alone have been published in 25 volumes quarto. His other poems were reprinted at Madrid in 1776, under the title of "The detached works of Lope de Vega," in 21 vols. quarto. His prodigious literary labours produced Lope almost as much money as glory. He amassed 100,000 ducats, but his treasures did not long bide with him. The poor ever found his purse open to them; and that taste for pomp, and that Castilian pride, which is gratified by extravagance and embarrassments, soon dissipated his wealth. After living in splendour, he died almost in poverty.

No poet has ever in his life enjoyed so much glory. Whenever he showed himself abroad, the crowd surrounded him, and saluted him with the appellation of The Prodigy of Nature. Children followed him with cries of pleasure, and every eye was fixed upon him. The religious College of Madrid, of which he was a member, elected him their president. Pope Urban VIII. presented him with the Cross of Malta, the title of Doctor of Theology, and the diploma of Treasurer of the Apostolic Chamber. He died in 1635, aged seventy-three. He was called the Spanish Phœnix.

In the comedies of "The Cloak and the Sword," or, as they might properly be called, of intrigue [and the essence of the Spanish theatre is intrigue], Lope has scarcely regarded probability in the order and connexion of his scenes. His chief object was to excite interest by the situation in which his characters were placed, and by the working up of his plot. One intrigue is interwoven with another; and the intricacy of the plot increases until the author, to terminate the whole, cuts asunder all the knots which he cannot other-

wise unravel, and marries all the couples who present themselves to him as candidates for that ceremony. Reflections and maxims of prudence are frequently to be met with in the course of his comedies, but morality, strictly so called, is never introduced into them. The public, for whom he wrote, would not have permitted him to dilate on a subject with which they conceived that they were sufficiently edified from the pulpit. His gallantry, on which every intrigue is founded, is of the most extravagant nature; not the slightest regard is paid to its decorum; and if it is partially regulated by the principles of honour, it is never influenced by those of morality. When the passions are portrayed, they possess all the character of the impetuous temperament of the nation. In the reveries of his lovers, Lope exhibits a fund of romantic declamation, and of *jeux d'esprit* quite inexhaustible. "Love excuses everything," was the maxim of the fashionable inhabitants of Madrid; and on the authority of this adage, all kinds of deceptions, perfidies of the basest nature, and the most scandalous intrigues, are represented without any reserve. His cavaliers draw their swords on every trifling occasion; and to inflict a wound, or even death, upon their adversaries, is considered as a circumstance of very little moment.

The sacred pieces of Lope de Vega depict in very faithful colours the religious spirit of the times, and, in common with his other works, present an exact picture of the prevailing manners. They are a strange mixture of Catholic piety, of fantastic imagination, and of noble poetry. The "Lives of the Saints" possess more dramatic effect than the "Sacramental Acts;" but, on the other hand, the religious mysteries in the latter are expressed by means of the allegories with greater dignity. Of all the dramatic works of

Lope, the "Lives of the Saints" are written with the least observance of the rules. In them we discover the most incongruous union of characters. Allegorical personages—buffoons, saints, countrymen, scholars, kings, the infant Christ, God the Father, the devil, and all the heterogeneous beings which the most grotesque imagination can conceive, are here made to act and to converse together.



SHAKESPEARE.

[BORN 1564. DIED 1616.]

DRYDEN—BLAIR.

THE character which Dryden has drawn of Shakespeare is not only just but uncommonly elegant and happy. "He was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily. When he describes anything, you more than see it—you feel it too. They who accuse him of wanting learning give him the greatest commendation. He was naturally learned. He needed not the spectacles of books to read nature. He looked inward, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike. Were he so, I should do him injury to compare him to the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid, his comic wit degenerating into clinches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him."

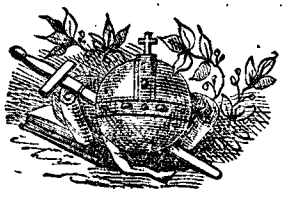
Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for tragedy and comedy, are altogether unrivalled. But, at the same time, it is a genius shooting wild—deficient in just taste, and unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolised by the Bri-

tish nation; much has been said and much has been written concerning him; criticism has been drawn to the very dregs in commentaries upon his words and witticisms; and yet it remains to this day in doubt whether his beauties or faults be greatest. Admirable scenes and passages without number there are in his plays; passages beyond what are to be found in any other dramatic author; but there is hardly any one of his plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious and comic in one piece, we are often interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words which he is fond of pursuing; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur on occasions when one should least wish to meet with them.

All these faults, however, Shakespeare redeems by two of the greatest excellences which any tragic poet can possess—his lively and diversified paintings of character, his strong natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues; on these his merit rests. Notwithstanding his many absurdities, all the while we are reading his plays we find ourselves in the midst of our fellows; we meet with men, vulgar perhaps in their manners, coarse or harsh in their sentiments; but still they are men. They speak with human voices, and are actuated by human passions; we are interested in what they say or do, because we feel that they are of the same nature with ourselves. It is therefore no matter of wonder that, from the more polished and regular, but more cold and artificial, performances of other poets, the public should return with pleasure to such warm and genuine representations of human nature. Shakespeare

possesses likewise the merit of having created for himself a sort of world of supernatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are described with such circumstances of awful and mysterious solemnity, and speak a language so peculiar to themselves, as strongly to affect the imagination.

With regard to his historical plays, they are, properly speaking, neither tragedies nor comedies, but a peculiar species of dramatic entertainment, calculated to describe the manner of the times of which he treats, to exhibit the principal characters, and to fix our attention on some of the most interesting events and revolutions of our own country.



BEN JONSON.

[BORN 1574. DIED 1637.]

DRYDEN.

AS to the dramatist to whose character we are now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper sphere, and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people. He was deeply conversed in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in "Sejanus and Cataline." But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears

not to be attacked by any law. He invades authors like a monarch, and what would be theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their poets had written either of his tragedies, we would have seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, it was that he weaved it too closely and laboriously, in his comedies especially. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanise our tongue, leaving the words which he translated even as much Latin as he found them; wherein, though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough comply with the idiom of ours. If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing: I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude; of him, as he has given us the most correct plays, so, in the precepts which he has laid down in his discoveries, we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us.

CALDERON.

[BORN 1601. DIED 1687.]

AUG. W. SCHLEGEL.

AT length appeared Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca, as fertile in genius and as diligent in writing as Lope; but a poet of a different kind—a true poet, indeed, if ever man deserved the name. For him, but in a superior degree, was renewed the admiration of nature, the enthusiasm of the public, and the dominion of the stage. The years of Calderon's age coincided with those of the seventeenth century. He was, therefore, sixteen years old when Cervantes died, and thirty-five at the time of the death of Lope, whom he survived nearly half a century. According to his biographers, Calderon wrote more than 120 tragedies or comedies, more than 100 sacred allegorical pieces—*autos sacramentales*—100 humorous interludes or saynetes, and many other pieces not dramatic. In the almost countless number of his works we find nothing left to chance; all is finished with the most perfect talent, agreeable to fixed principles, and to the fixed rules of art. This is undeniable, even if we should consider him as a mannerist in the pure and elevated romantic drama, and should regard as extravagant those lofty flights of poetry which rise to the extreme bounds of imagination. Calderon has converted into his own what served only as a model to his pre-

decessors, and he required the noblest and most delicate flowers to satisfy his taste. Hence he repeats himself often in many expressions, images, and comparisons, and even in dramatic situations, though he was too rich to borrow, I do not say from others, but even from himself. Theatrical perspective is, in his eyes, the first object of the dramatic art; but this view, so restricted in others, becomes positive in him. I am not acquainted with any dramatic author who has succeeded in an equal degree in producing that poetical charm which affects the senses, at the same time that it preserves its etherial essence.

In the plays of Calderon, which represent modern manners, and which for the most part descend to the line of common life, we feel ourselves influenced by a charm of fancy which prevents us from regarding them as comedies in the ordinary sense of the word. The comedies of Shakespeare are composed of two parts, strangers to each other—the comic part, which is always conformable to English manners, because the comic imitation is drawn from well known and local circumstances; and the romantic part, which is derived from the stage of the south, as his native soil was not in itself sufficiently poetical. In Spain, on the contrary, national manners might be regarded in an ideal point of view. It is true that would not have been possible if Calderon had introduced us into the interior of domestic life, where its wants and habits reduce every thing to narrow and vulgar limits. His comedies conclude, like those of the ancients, with marriages, but differ from them wholly in the antecedent part. In these, in order to gratify sensual passions and interested views, the most immoral means are often employed; the persons, with all the powers of their minds, are only physical beings opposed to one another,

seeking to take advantage of their mutual weaknesses. In those a passionate sentiment prevails, which ennobles all that it surrounds, because it attaches to all circumstances an affection of the mind. Calderon presents to us, it is true, his principal personages of both sexes in the first effervescence of youth, and in the confident anticipation of all the joys of life; but the prize for which they contend, and which they pursue, rejecting all others, cannot, in their eyes, be exchanged for any other good. Honour, love, and jealousy are the ruling passions. Their noble struggle form the plot of the piece, which is not entangled by elaborate knavery or deceit. Honour is there a feeling which rests in an elevated morality, sanctifying the principle without regard to consequences. This refined sentiment equally predominates in the female characters of Calderon, and overrules the power of love, who only ranks at the side of honour, and not above it. According to the sentiments which the poet professes, the honour of woman consists in confining her love to an honourable man, loving him with pure affection, and allowing no equivocal attentions inconsistent with the most severe female dignity. This love demands an inviolable secresy, until a legal union permits a public declaration. It is true that, under this doctrine, in order to satisfy love, trick and dissimulation, which honour elsewhere forbids, are permitted. But the most delicate regard is observed in the collision of love with other duties, and particularly those of friendship.

But the true genius of Calderon is more particularly shown in his management of religious subjects. Love is painted by him with its common attributes, and speaks only the language of the poetic art. But religion is his true flame—the heart of his heart. For her alone he touches

those chords to which the soul most deeply responds. To him life is no longer an enigma—even his tears, like dew-drops in the beams of morning, reflect the image of heaven. His poetry, whatever the subject may ostensibly be, is an unceasing hymn of joy in the splendours of creation.



CORNEILLE.

[BORN 1606. DIED 1684.]

HALLAM.

THE language of Corneille is elevated; his sentiments, if sometimes hyperbolical, generally noble, where he has not to deal with the passion of love; conscious of the nature of his own powers, he has avoided subjects wherein this must entirely predominate: it was to be, as he thought, an accessory, but never a principal source of dramatic interest. In this, however, as a general law of tragedy, he was mistaken; love is by no means unfit for the chief source of tragic distress, but comes in generally with a cold and feeble effect as a subordinate emotion. In those Roman stories which he affected, its expression could hardly be otherwise than insipid and incongruous. Corneille would probably have dispensed with it, like Shakespeare in "Coriolanus" and "Julius Cæsar;" but the taste of his contemporaries, formed in the pedantic school of romance, has imposed fetters on his genius in almost every drama. In the "Cid," where the subject left him no choice, he has succeeded better in the delineation of love than on any other occasion; yet even here we often find the cold exaggeration of complimentary verse, in place of the voice of nature. But other scenes of this play, especially in the first act, which bring forth the proud Castilian characters of the two fathers, *Rodrigo* and *Chimène*, are full of the nervous eloquence of Corneille; and the general style, though it may

not have borne the fastidious criticism either of the Academy or Voltaire, is so far above anything which had been heard on the French stage, that it was but a very frigid eulogy in the former to say that "it had acquired a considerable reputation among works of the kind." It had at that time astonished Paris; but the prejudices of Cardinal Richelieu, and the envy of inferior authors, joined perhaps to the proverbial unwillingness of critical bodies to commit themselves by warmth of praise, had some degree of influence on the judgment which the Academy pronounced on the "Cid," though I do not think it was altogether so unjust and uncandid as has sometimes been supposed.

Voltaire has well distinguished "the fine scenes of Corneille and the fine tragedies of Racine." It can perhaps hardly be said that, with the exception of Polyeucte, the former has produced a single play which, taken as a whole, we can commend. The keys of the passions were not given to his custody. But in that which he introduced upon the French stage, and which long continued to be its boast—expressive, energetic declamation; thoughts masculine, bold, and sometimes sublime, conveyed in a style for the most part clear, condensed, and noble, and in a rhythm sonorous and satisfactory to the ear,—he has not since been equalled. Lucan, it has always been said, was the favourite study of Corneille. No one can perhaps admire one who has not a strong relish for the other. That the tragedian has ever surpassed the highest flights of the Roman prototype it might be difficult to prove; but if his fire is not more intense, it is accompanied by less smoke; his hyperboles, for such he has, are less frequent and less turgid; his taste is more judicious; he knows better, especially in description, what to choose, and where to stop.

MILTON.

[BORN 1608. DIED 1674.]

JOHNSON.

MILTON had considered Creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions, therefore, were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace, but his natural part is gigantic loftiness. He can please when pleasure is required, but it is his peculiar power to astonish. He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others: the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful. He therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said—on which he might fire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature and the occurrences of life did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow

for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery into worlds where only imagination can travel; and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings; to trace the councils of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven. But he could not be always in other worlds; he must sometimes revisit earth and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by his fertility.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature, do not seem to be always copied from original form, or to have the freshness, raciness, or energy of immediate observation. He sees nature, as Dryden expresses it, "through the spectacles of books," and, on most occasions, calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers: Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like Ulysses between the two Sicilian whirlpools. His similes are not confined within the limits of regular composition. His great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments, it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets. For this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epic poets, wanting the light of revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue; their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or pas-

sive fortitude, and, sometimes, of prudence, but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy. In Milton, every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except where the train of the narrative requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

The highest praise of genius is invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations of men must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hinderance; he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, or solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness; but difficulties vanished at his touch. He was born for whatever is arduous, and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it was not the first.

MOLIERE.

[BORN 1622. DIED 1673.]

HALLAM.

THE French have claimed for Molière, and few persons have disputed the pretension, a superiority over all earlier and later writers of comedy. The grace and gentlemanly eloquence of Terence he has not equalled; but in the more appropriate merits of comedy, just and forcible delineation of character, skilful contrivance of circumstances, and humorous dialogue, we must award him the prize. The Italian and Spanish dramatists are quite unworthy to be named in comparison; and if the French theatre has in later times, as is certainly the case, produced some excellent comedies, we have, I believe, no reason to contradict the suffrage of the nation itself, that they owe almost as much to what they have caught from this great model as to the natural genius of their authors. But it is not for us to abandon the rights of Shakespeare. In all things most essential to comedy, we cannot acknowledge his inferiority to Molière. He had far more invention of characters, with an equal vivacity and force in their delineation. His humour was at least as abundant and natural, his wit incomparably more brilliant; in fact, Molière hardly exhibits this quality at all. "The Merry Wives of Windsor," almost the only pure comedy of Shakespeare, is surely not

disadvantageously compared with "George Dandin" or "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," or even with "L'Ecole des Femmes." For the "Tartuffe" or "Misanthrope," it is vain to seek a proper counterpart in Shakespeare; they belong to a different state of manners. But the powers of Molière are directed with greater skill to their object; none of his energy is wasted; the spectator is not interrupted by the serious scenes of tragi-comedy, nor his attention drawn aside by poetical episodes. Of Shakespeare we may justly say that he had the greater genius, but perhaps of Molière, that he has written the best comedies. We cannot, at least, put any third dramatist in comparison with him. Fletcher and Jonson, Wycherly and Congreve, Farquhar and Sheridan, with great excellences of their own, fall short of his merit as well as his fame. Yet, in humorous conception, our admirable play, "The Provoked Husband," the best parts of which are due to Vanbrugh, seems to be equal to anything he has left. His spirited and easy versification stands, of course, untouched by any English rivalry. We may have been wise in rejecting verse from our stage, but we have certainly given the French the right to claim all the honour that belongs to it.

RACINE.

[BORN 1639. DIED 1699.]

HALLAM.

VOLTAIRE, La Harpe, and in general, I apprehend, the later French critics, have given the preference to Racine over Corneille. I presume to join my suffrage to theirs. Racine appears to me the superior tragedian; and I must add that I think him next to Shakespeare among all the moderns. The comparison with Euripides is so natural that it can hardly be avoided. Certainly no tragedy of the Greek poet is so skilful or so perfect as "Athalie" or "Britannicus." The tedious scenes, during which the action is stagnant; the impertinences of useless, often perverse, morality; the extinction by bad management of the sympathy that had been raised in the earlier part of a play; the foolish alternation of repartees in a series of single lines, will never be found in Racine. But when we look only at the higher excellences of Euripides, there is perhaps a depth of pathos, and an intensity of dramatic effect, which Racine himself has not attained. The difference between the energy and the sweetness of the two languages is so important in the comparison, that I shall give even this preference with some hesitation.

The style of Racine is exquisite. Perhaps he is second only to Virgil among all the poets; but I will give the praise

of this in the words of a native critic [La Harpe]: "His expression is always so happy and so natural, that it seems as if no other could have been found, and every word is placed in such a manner that we cannot fancy any other place to have suited it as well. The structure of his style is such, that nothing could have been displaced, nothing added, nothing retrenched; it is one unalterable whole. Even his incorrectnesses are often but sacrifices required by good taste, nor would anything be more difficult to write over again than a line of Racine. No one has enriched the language with a greater number of turns of phrase; no one is bold with more felicity and discretion, or figurative with more grace and propriety; no one has handled with more command an idiom often rebellious, or with more skill an instrument always difficult; no one has better understood that delicacy of style, which must not be mistaken for feebleness, and is in fact but that air of ease which conceals from the reader the labour of the work and the artifices of the composition; or better managed the variety of cadences, the resources of rhythm, the association and deduction of ideas. In short, if we consider that his perfection in these respects may be opposed to that of Virgil, and that he spoke a language less flexible, less poetical, and less harmonious, we shall readily believe that Racine is, of all mankind, the one to whom nature has given the greatest talent for versification."

CONGREVE.

[BORN 1670. DIED 1729.]

JOHNSON.

THERE seems to be a strange affectation in authors of appearing to have done everything by chance. His "Old Bachelor" was written for amusement in the languor of convalescence, yet it is apparently composed with great elaborateness of dialogue, and incessant ambition of wit. The age of the writer considered, it is indeed a very wonderful performance, for whenever written it was acted [1693], when he was not more than twenty-one years old, and was then recommended by Mr Dryden, Mr Southern, and Mr Maynwaring. Dryden said that he had never seen such a first play; but they found it deficient in some things requisite to the success of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the stage. Southern used to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that when Congreve read it to the players, he pronounced it so wretchedly that they had almost rejected it. Such a comedy, written at such an age, requires some consideration. As the lighter species of dramatic poetry professes the imitation of common life, of real manners, and daily incidents, it apparently presupposes a familiar knowledge of many characters, and exact observation of the passing world; the difficulty, there-

fore, is to conceive how this knowledge can be obtained by a boy.

But whatever objections may be made either to his comic or tragic excellences, they are lost at once in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he produced four plays before he had passed his twenty-fifth year, before other men, even such as are some time to shine in eminence, have passed their probation of literature, or presume to hope for any other notice than such as is bestowed on diligence and inquiry. Amongst all the efforts of early genius which literary history records, I doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

The cause of Congreve [against the Puritans] was not tenable; whatever glosses he might use for the defence or palliation of single passages, the general tenor and tendency of his plays must always be condemned. It is acknowledged, with universal conviction, that the perusal of his works will make no man better, and that their ultimate effect is to represent pleasure in alliance with vice, and to relax those obligations by which life ought to be regulated.

Congreve has merit of the highest kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot speak distinctly, for since I inspected them many years have passed; but what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comic excellence, which he supposed to consist in gay remarks and unexpected answers; but that which he endeavoured he seldom failed of performing. His scenes exhibit

not much of humour, imagery, or passion; his personages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward or strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate caricatures. His comedies have, therefore, in some degree the operation of tragedies; they surprise rather than divert, and raise admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.



POPE.

[BORN 1688. DIED 1744.]

DE QUINCEY.

THE question whether Pope was a poet has hardly yet been settled, and is hardly worth settling; for, if he was not a great poet, he must have been a great prose writer—that is, he was a great writer of some sort. He was a man of exquisite faculties, and of the most refined taste; and as he chose verse (the most obvious distinction of poetry) as the vehicle to express his ideas, he has generally passed for a poet, and a good one. If, indeed, by a great poet we mean one who gives the utmost grandeur to our conceptions of nature, or the utmost force to the passions of the heart, Pope was not, in this sense, a great poet; for the best, the characteristic power of his mind lay the clean contrary way—namely, in representing things as they appear to the indifferent observer, stripped of prejudice and passion, as in his Critical Essays; or in representing them in the most contemptible and insignificant point of view, as in his Satires; or in clothing the little with mock dignity, as in his Poems of Fancy; or in adorning the trivial incidents and familiar relations of life with the utmost elegance of expression, and all the flattering illusions of friendship and self-love, as in his Epistles. He was not, then, distinguished as a poet of lofty enthusiasm, of strong imagina-

tion, with a passionate sense of the beauties of nature, or a deep insight into the workings of the heart; but he was a wit, a critic, and a man of sense, of observation, and the world; with a keen relish for the elegancies of art, or of nature when embellished by art; a quick tact for propriety of thought and manners, as established by the forms and customs of society; refined sympathy with the sentiments and habitudes of human life, as he felt them within the little circle of his family and friends.

Pope saw nature only dressed by art; he judged of beauty by fashion; he sought for truth in the opinions of the world; he judged of the feelings of others by his own. The capacious soul of Shakespeare had an intuitive and mighty sympathy with whatever could enter into the heart of man in all possible circumstances; Pope had an exact knowledge of all that he himself loved and hated, wished or wanted. Milton has winged his daring flight from heaven to earth through chaos and old night. Pope's muse never wandered with safety but from his library to his grotto, or from his grotto into his library back again. His mind dwelt with greater pleasure in his own garden than in the garden of Eden; he could describe the faulty, whole-length mirror that reflected his own person, better than the smooth surface of the lake that reflects the face of heaven; a piece of cut-glass, or a pair of paste buckles, with more brilliance and effect than a thousand dew-drops glittering in the sun. He would be more delighted with a patent lamp than with "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow," that fills the skies with its soft, silent lustre, that trembles through the cottage window, and cheers the watchful mariner on the lonely wave. That which was nearest to him was the greatest; the fashion of the day bore sway in his mind over the immutable laws of

nature. He preferred the artificial to the natural in external objects, because he had a stronger fellow-feeling with the self-love of the maker or proprietor of a gew-gaw than admiration of that which was interesting to all mankind. He preferred the artificial to the natural in passion, because the involuntary and uncalculating impulses of the one hurried him away with a force and vehemence with which he could not grapple, while he could trifle with the conventional and superficial modifications of mere sentiment at will; laugh at or admire, put them off or on, like a masquerade dress; make much or little of them, indulge them for a longer or a shorter time as he pleased; and because, while they amused his fancy and exercised his ingenuity, they never once disturbed his vanity, his levity, or indifference. His mind was the antithesis of strength and grandeur. He had none of the enthusiasm of poetry; he was in poetry what the sceptic is in religion.

THOMSON.

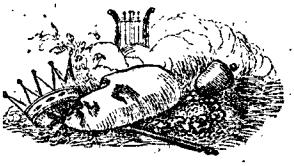
[BORN 1700. DIED 1748.]

JOHNSON.

AS a writer, this poet is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking and expressing his thoughts is original. His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation. He thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius. He looks round on nature and on life with the eye which nature bestows only on a poet, the eye which distinguishes, in everything presented to its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained, and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast and attends to the minute. The reader of the "Seasons" wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shows him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses. His is one of the works in which blank verse is properly used; Thomson's wide expansion of general views, and his enumeration of circumstantial varieties, would have been obstructed and embarrassed by the frequent intersection of the sense, which is the necessary effect of rhyme.

His description of extended scenes and general effects

brings before us the whole magnificence of nature, whether pleasing or dreadful. The gaiety of spring, the splendour of summer, the tranquillity of autumn, and the horror of winter, take in their turn possession of the mind. The poet leads us through the appearances of things as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his own enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments. Nor is the naturalist without his part of the entertainment, for he is assisted to recollect and combine, to arrange his discoveries and to amplify the sphere of his contemplation.



COWPER.

[BORN 1731. DIED 1800.]

JEFFREY.

THE personal character of Cowper is easily estimated from the writings he has left, and the anecdotes recorded of him. He seems to have been chiefly remarkable for a certain feminine gentleness and delicacy of nature, that shrank back from all that was boisterous, presumptuous, or rude. His secluded life, and awful impressions of religion, concurred in fixing upon his manners something of a saintly purity and decorum, and in cherishing that pensive and contemplative turn of mind by which he was so much distinguished. His temper appears to have been yielding and benevolent; and though sufficiently steady and confident in the opinions he had adopted, he was very little inclined in general to force them upon the conviction of others. The warmth of his religious zeal made an occasional exception, but the habitual temper of his mind was toleration and indulgence; and it would be difficult perhaps to name a satirical and popular author so entirely free from jealousy and fastidiousness, or so much disposed to make the most liberal and impartial estimate of the merit of others, in literature, in politics, and in the virtues and accomplishments of social life. No angry or uneasy passions, indeed, seem at any time to have found place in his

bosom; and, being incapable of malevolence himself, he probably passed through life without exciting that feeling in the breast of another.

The great merit of Cowper as a writer appears to us to consist in the boldness and originality of his composition, and in the fortunate audacity with which he has carried the dominion of poetry into regions that had been considered as inaccessible to her ambition. The gradual refinement of taste had for nearly a century been weakening the force of original genius. Our poets had become timid and fastidious, and had circumscribed themselves, both in the choice and the management of their subjects, by the observance of a limited number of models, who were thought to have exhausted all the legitimate resources of the art. Cowper was one of the first who crossed the enchanted circle, who reclaimed the natural liberty of invention, and walked abroad in the open field of observation as freely as those by whom it was originally trodden. But while he extended the sphere of poetical composition, and communicated a singular character of freedom, force, and originality to his own performances, it must not be dissembled that the presumption which belongs to most innovators has betrayed him into many defects. In disdaining to follow the footsteps of others, he has frequently mistaken the way, and has been exasperated by their blunders to rush into opposite extremes. In his contempt for their scrupulous selection of topics, he has introduced some that are unquestionably low and uninteresting; and in his zeal to strip off the tinsel and embroidery of their language, he has sometimes torn it, like Jack's coat in the "Tale of a Tub," into terrible rents, and beggarly tatters.

Mr Hayley has pronounced a warm eulogium on the satirical talents of his friend; but it does not appear to us

either that this was the style in which he was qualified to excel, or that he has made a judicious selection of subjects on which to exercise it. There is something too keen and vehement in his invective, and an excess of austerity in his doctrines, that is not atoned for by the beauty or the truth of his descriptions. Foppery and affectation are not such hateful and gigantic vices as to deserve all the anathemas that are bestowed on them; nor can we believe that soldiership or Sunday music have produced all the terrible effects he has ascribed to them. There is something very undignified too, to say no worse of them, in the protracted parodies and mock heroic passages with which he seeks to enliven some of his gravest productions. The Sofa, for instance, in the "Task," is but a feeble imitation of the Splendid Shilling; the Monitor is a copy of something still lower; and the tedious directions for raising cucumbers, which began by calling a hot-bed a stercoraceous heap, seem to have been intended as a counterpart to the tragedy of Tom Thumb.

ALFIERI.

[BORN 1749. DIED 1803].

SISMONDI.

THE creation of a new Italian drama is a phenomenon which strikes us with astonishment. Before Alfieri's time the Italians were inferior to all the nations of Europe in the dramatic art. Alfieri has ranged himself by the side of the great French tragedians, and he shares with them the advantages which they possess over all others. He has united the beauties of art, unity, singleness of subject, and probability,—the properties of the French drama,—to the sublimity of situation and character, and the important events of the Greek theatre, and to the profound thought and sentiment of the English stage. He has rescued Tragedy from the saloons of courts, to which the manners of the reign of Louis XIV. had restricted her; he has introduced her to councils, to public places, to the state; and he has given to the most elevated of poetical productions the most noble, the most important, general interest. He has annihilated the conventional forms which substituted a ridiculous affectation for the sublimity of nature; the gallantry derived from the old French romances, which exhibits the heroes of Greece and Rome under a preposterous disguise; the honied sweetness and pastoral languor which,

since the time of Guarini, represented all the heroic characters of the Italian stage with effeminate sentiments and manners; the affectation of chivalry and valour, which, on the Spanish stage, attaching life itself to a delicate and scrupulous point of honour, converts the loftiest characters into bravoes eager to destroy each other. The gallantry of romance, the effeminacy of pastorals, the point of honour of chivalry, appeared to him so many masks imposed upon nature, under which all true feelings and passions were concealed from view. He has torn off these masks, and has exhibited on the stage man in his real greatness, and in his true relations.

Alfieri was of all poets the most rigid observer of dramatic unity. I do not speak merely of the unities of time and place, to which he has scrupulously adhered, and which, implicitly observed on the French stage, have been wholly neglected in those of Spain, Germany, and England. It is the unity of action and interest which forms the essence of his manner, and which is exclusively peculiar to him, although, in all known theatres, as well romantic as classic, a respect for this unity is professed as an essential rule of dramatic art. Alfieri's aim was to exhibit on the stage a single action and a single passion, to introduce it in the first verse, and to keep it in view to the last, not to admit the diversion of the subject for a moment, and to remove, as idle and injurious to the interest of the piece every character, every event, and every conversation which was not essentially connected with the plot, and which did not contribute to advance it. In this manner, expelling from the theatre all confidants and inferior parts, he has reduced almost all his tragedies to the number of four persons, essential to the piece, and at the same time suppressing all conversations foreign to the plot,

he has rendered his tragedies shorter than those of any other poet. They seldom, indeed, exceed fourteen hundred lines.

It appears, however, to me, that Alfieri has deceived himself in adopting this predominating idea of poetic unity. The perfection of the unity is found in the combined relation of numerous sensations. Harmony consists in bringing to one centre diverging sounds; it produces a vast and varied creation animated by a single sentiment. If there be not a contrast of the composite with the simple, there is no difficulty vanquished, no charm for the mind. A union of instruments of different pitch and tone, produces a concert; but in the sound of a single bell there can be no harmony, however fine the sound may in itself be. Thus, Alfieri in his tragedies touches only one string. The art of the poet consists in uniting various events, characters, and passions in a single action; and he does not exercise this art when all these characters are suppressed, and the action remains insulated. The simultaneous representation of several actions would not possess harmony, because it would be wanting in unity; and the representation of a single action, deprived of all accessory circumstances, has no more claim to harmony, since it is wanting in variety.

CHATTERTON.

[BORN 1752. DIED 1770.]

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

THE heart that can peruse the fate of Chatterton without being moved is little to be envied for its tranquillity, but the intellects of those men must be as deficient as their hearts are uncharitable, who, confounding all shades of moral distinction, have ranked his literary fiction of Rowley in the same class of crimes with pecuniary forgery, and have calculated that, if he had not died by his own hand, he would have probably ended his days upon a gallows. This disgusting sentence has been pronounced upon a youth who was exemplary for severe study, temperance, and natural affection. His Rowleian forgery must indeed be pronounced improper by the general law which condemns all falsifications of history; but it deprived no man of his fame—it had no sacrilegious interference with the memory of departed genius,—it had not, like Lauder's imposture, any malignant motive to rob a party or a country of a name which was its pride and ornament.

Setting aside the opinion of those uncharitable biographers whose imaginations have conducted him to the gibbet, it may be owned that his unformed character exhibited strong and conflicting evidence of good and evil. Even the momentary project of the infidel boy to become a Methodist preacher

betrays an obliquity of design and a contempt of human credulity that is not very amiable. But had he been spared, his pride and ambition would have come to flow in their proper channels,—his understanding would have taught him the practical value of truth and the dignity of virtue, and he would have despised artifice, when he felt the strength and security of wisdom. In estimating the promises of his genius, I would rather lean to the utmost enthusiasm of his admirers, than to the cold opinion of those who are afraid of being blinded to the defects of the poems attributed to Rowley, by the veil of obsolete phraseology which is thrown over them. If we look to the ballad of Sir Charles Bawdin, and translate it into modern English, we shall find its strength and interest to have no dependence on obsolete words. In the striking passage of the martyr Bawdin, standing erect in his car to rebuke Edward, who beheld him from the window, when

> "The tyrant's soul rushed to his face;"

And when he exclaimed,—

> "Behold the man! he speaks the truth,
> He's greater than a king:"

In these, and in all the striking parts of the ballad, no effect is owing to much antiquity, but to the simple and high conception of a great and just character, who

> "Summ'd the actions of the day,
> Each night before he slept."

What a moral portraiture from the hand of a boy! The inequality of Chatterton's various productions may be compared to the disproportions of the ungrown giant. His works had nothing of the definite neatness of that precocious talent which stops short in early maturity. His thirst for

knowledge was that of a being taught by instinct to lay up materials for the exercise of great and undeveloped powers. Even in his favourite maxim, pushed, it might be, to hyperbole, that a man by abstinence and perseverance might accomplish whatever he pleased, may be traced the indications of a genius which nature had meant to achieve immortality. Tasso alone can be compared to him as a juvenile prodigy. No English poet ever equalled him at the same age.



ROBERT BURNS.

[BORN 1759. DIED 1796.]

CARLYLE.

TO the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny —for so in our ignorance we must speak—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit which might have soared, could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom, and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul, so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal nature, and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning. The daisy falls not unheeded under his ploughshare, nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident pains, "to thole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld." The "hoar visage" of winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to Him that walketh on the wings of the wind." A true poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music!

But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling, what trustful, boundless love, what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him. Poverty is indeed his companion, but love also, and courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart; and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul, and they rise in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest.

He has a just self-consciousness which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride for defence, not for offence; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The peasant-poet bears himself, we might say, like a king in exile: he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel; the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye under which the "insolence of condescension" cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of poetry and manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms, and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despon-

dency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship, unbosoms himself often to the unworthy, and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship; and yet "he was quick to learn," a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers, but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our peasant show himself among us, "a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody." And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarrelling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels. In such toils was that mighty spirit sorrowfully wasted; and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

WORDSWORTH.

[BORN 1770. DIED 1850.]

DE QUINCEY.

AT length, as the eighteenth century was winding up its accounts, forth stept William Wordsworth, of whom, as a reader of all pages of nature, it may said that, if we except Dampier, the admirable buccaneer, the gentle *flibustier*, and some few professional naturalists, he first and he last looked at natural objects with the eye that neither will be dazzled from without, nor cheated by preconceptions from within. Most men look at nature in the hurry of a confusion that distinguishes nothing; their error is from without. Pope, again, and many who live in towns, make such blunders as that of supposing the moon to tip with silver the hills behind which she is rising; not by erroneous use of their eyes—for they use them not at all—but by inveterate preconceptions. Scarcely has there been a poet with what could be called a learned eye, or an eye extensively learned, before Wordsworth. Much affectation there has been of that sort since his rise, and at all times much counterfeit enthusiasm; but the sum of the matter is this, that Wordsworth had his passion for nature fixed in his blood; it was a necessity, like that of the mulberry leaf to the silkworm; and through his commerce with nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was, viz., from the truth of his love,

that his knowledge grew; whilst most others, being merely hypocrites in their love, have turned out merely sciolists in their knowledge.

A volume might be filled with such glimpses of novelty as Wordsworth has first laid bare, even to the apprehension of the senses. For the understanding, when moving in the same track of human sensibilities, he has done only not so much. How often, to give an instance or two, must the human heart have felt the case, and yearned for an expression of the case, when there are sorrows which descend far below the region in which tears gather; and yet, who has ever given utterance to this feeling until Wordsworth came with his immortal line—

"Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

This sentiment, and others that might be adduced, such as "The child is father of the man," have even passed into the popular heart, and are often quoted by those who know not whom they are quoting. Magnificent, again, is the sentiment, and yet an echo to one which lurks amongst all hearts, in relation to the frailty of merely human schemes for working good, which so often droop and collapse through the unsteadiness of human energies,—

"Foundations must be laid
In heaven."

How? Foundations laid in realms that are above? But that is impossible; that is at war with elementary physics; foundations must be laid below. Yes; and even so the poet throws the mind yet more forcibly upon the hyperphysical character, on the grandeur transcending all physics, of those spiritual and shadowy foundations which alone are enduring.

But the great distinction of Wordsworth, and the pledge

of his increasing popularity, is the extent of his sympathy with what is really permanent in human feelings, and also the depth of this sympathy. Young and Cowper, the two earlier leaders in the province of meditative poetry, are too circumscribed in the range of their sympathies, too narrow, too illiberal, and too exclusive. Both these poets manifested the quality of their strength in the quality of their public reception. Popular in some degree from the first, they entered upon the inheritance of their fame almost at once. Far different was the fate of Wordsworth; for in poetry of this class, which appeals to what lies deepest in man, in proportion to the native power of the poet, and his fitness for permanent life, is the strength of resistance in the public taste. Whatever is too original will be hated at the first. It must slowly mould a public for itself, and the resistance of the early thoughtless judgments must be overcome by a counter-resistance to itself in a better audience, slowly mustering against the first. Forty and seven years [written in 1845] it is since William Wordsworth first appeared as an author. Twenty of those years he was the scoff of the world, and his poetry a by-word of scorn. Since then, and more than once, senates have rung with acclamations to the echo of his name. Now, at this moment, whilst we are talking about him, he has entered upon his seventy-sixth year. For himself, according to the course of nature, he cannot be far from his setting; but his poetry is only now clearing the clouds that gathered about its rising. Meditative poetry is perhaps that province of literature which will ultimately maintain most power amongst the generations which are coming; but in this department at least there is little competition to be apprehended by Wordsworth, from anything that has appeared since the death of Shakespeare.

COLERIDGE.

[BORN 1772. DIED 1834.]

FOSTER.

A NAME and character which have been too much and too long before the public to leave any one unapprised that a wonderful splendour of genius suffered a malignant moral eclipse during a large portion of his life. It is, indeed, a most humiliating and melancholy spectacle: a mind at once of vast comprehension, and minute and exquisite perception; opulent in multifarious knowledge; sympathetic with everything good and amiable; ardent in admiration of the great, the noble, the sublime; but subjected, enslaved, degraded, and tormented by one tyrant habit [opium-eating], and that habit formed in a kind of indulgence, of which many persons may wonder how the allurement should be so irresistible, especially when they see how severely it became its own punishment. That punishment fell on the conscience with even more deadly infliction than on the bodily frame. Many of the men of talent who have been the slaves of vicious habits have lived under a very lax conviction—some of them in a disbelief or contempt of revealed religion. Some of them who did retain from their education a certain thoughtless impression of its truth and authority, were so ignorant of its nature, and so seldom reminded of it, that they were but slightly and tran-

siently disturbed by some vague idea, never consolidated into faith, of the Christian laws, the Supreme Judge, and a future retribution. But Coleridge was a firm and even zealous believer in Christianity; an exercised theologian; and, subsequently to the early stage of his inquiries and opinions, held a creed accordant, in the most material points, with what has been denominated the evangelic scheme of doctrine. To be, notwithstanding a constant recognition of all this, together with every other remonstrant consideration, and under the solemn menaces which such a faith was incessantly darting on the soul, and with the consciousness all the while of great intellectual power—still to be the hopeless victim of a vice abhorred while surrendered to; to have it clinging, and gnawing, and insatiable; to be, like Prometheus, chained for the vulture's repast—this is truly an exhibition fraught, with all the powers of tragedy, to raise pity and terror. It is but a feeble image for comparison that is recalled to us in the description of some fine fleet and powerful animal, desperately and vainly bounding and plunging over the wilderness, under a leopard fixed with fangs and talons over its crest. The appropriate image would be that of a beautiful spirit closely and relentlessly pursued, grappled at, poisoned, and paralysed by a demon from the dark world.

It is a disconsolate view of his history. A man of such rare talents and accomplishments, in the energy of youth, with the well-spring in his soul of all vigorous and aspiring thoughts; thrown on the world (by himself, as he said,) for a course perfectly erratic; without destination, without friends, but by accident, or any but the most precarious means of support, till the annuity from the Wedgewoods; his imagination bewitched into a scheme in all ways and degrees Utopian:

a most imprudent marriage,—imprudent, we mean, on any consideration of pecuniary competence; the habits of a "chartered libertine" from everything like method, regularity, or punctuality; a fertility of transitory projects, rising like bubbles through a disturbed fluid, to break and vanish into the atmosphere; irksome shifts to get over the month or the week; changes of residence; the tenor of life broken by excursions, jaunts of amusement, ramblings and wanderings with no sufficient object, and apparently prompted very much by pure restlessness; sudden starts away, at the slightest touch of accident, from employments or engagements; diminutive occasional compositions, sought out and gathered, with an impatient task-work for making up their deficiency of quantity to fill a small volume, as a temporary resource; and all this while the undefined idea of something great and extraordinary in possibility, and an indignant feeling against adverse fate, with no great severity of reflection, as it would seem, on his own defects, as partly at least the real evil under which he was suffering.

At the same time, it is but just to observe, that it is not so easy to say what he should or might have done, as to reproach him for the faults which went so far to frustrate his good intentions. But let us suppose him, from the time that the American fantasy had gone off, coming to a resolute stand; compelling himself to a deliberate consideration of what was practicable and eligible, for his talents and in his circumstances; determined to concentrate the whole force of his mind on a selected object; denying himself that social dissipation in which he squandered his mental wealth and his time; peremptory with himself to forego the vanity of temporary display, for the production of what should be a permanent honour; carefully economising the means, though

narrow, which the respect and admiration of such a man, so employed, would not have suffered to fail him, while in a progress toward public patronage—suppose thus much, and he might have raised on this tract of his time some substantial and elaborated monument of his genius, instead of leaving it, as now beheld, a comparatively desolate scene of small operations and abortive plans; showing, indeed, that a capable power has been there, but too desultory and vagrant to do itself justice.'



THOMAS MOORE.

[BORN 1779. DIED 1852.]

HAZLITT.

A MUSE which is another Ariel, as tricksy, as indefatigable, and as humane a spirit. His fancy is for ever on the wing, flutters in the gale, glitters in the sun. Everything lives, moves, and sparkles in his poetry; while, over all, love waves his purple light. His thoughts are as restless as many, and as bright as the insects that people the sun's beam. "So work the honey bees," extracting liquid sweets from opening buds; so the butterfly expands its wings to the idle air; so the thistle's silver down is wafted over summer seas. An airy voyager on life's stream, his mind inhales the fragrance of a thousand shores, and drinks of endless pleasures under halcyon skies. Wherever his footsteps tend over the enamelled ground of fairy fiction,

> "Around him the bees in play flutter and cluster,
> And gaudy butterflies frolic around."

The fault of Mr Moore is an exuberance of involuntary power. His facility of production lessens the effect of, and hangs as a dead weight upon what he produces. His levity at last oppresses. The infinite delight he takes in such an infinite number of things creates indifference in minds less susceptible of pleasure than his own. He exhausts attention by being inexhaustible. His variety cloys; his rapidity

dazzles and distracts the sight. The graceful ease with which he lends himself to every subject, the genial spirit with which he indulges in every sentiment, prevents him from giving their full force to the masses of things, from connecting them into a whole. He wants intensity, strength, and grandeur. His mind does not brood over the great and permanent; it glances over the surfaces, the first impressions of things, instead of grappling with the deep-rooted prejudices of the mind, its inveterate habits, and that "perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart." His pen, as it is rapid and fanciful, wants momentum and passion. It requires the same principle to make us thoroughly like poetry, that makes us like ourselves so well—the feeling of continued identity. The impressions of Mr Moore's poetry are detached, desultory, and physical. Its gorgeous colours brighten and fade like the rainbows. Its sweetness evaporates like the effluvia exhaled from beds of flowers. His gay, laughing style, which relates to the immediate pleasures of love or wine, is better than his sentimental and romantic vein. His Irish melodies are not free from affectation and a certain sickliness of pretension. His serious descriptions are apt to run into flowery tenderness. His pathos sometimes melts into a mawkish sensibility, or crystalises into all the prettinesses of allegorical language and glittering hardness of external imagery.

Mr Moore ought not to have written "Lalla Rookh," even for three thousand guineas. His fame is worth more than that. He should have minded the advice of Fadladeen. It is not, however, a failure, so much as an evasion, and a consequent disappointment of public expectation. He should have left it to others to break conventions with nations and faith with the world: He should at any rate have kept his with the public. "Lalla Rookh" is not what people

wanted to see whether Mr Moore could do,—namely, whether he could write a long epic poem. It is four short tales. The interest, however, is often high-wrought and tragic, but the execution still turns to the effeminate and voluptuous side. Fortitude of mind is the first requisite of a tragic or epic writer. Happiness of nature, and felicity of genius, are the pre-eminent characteristics of the bard of Erin. If he is not perfectly contented with what he is, all the world beside is. He had no temptation to risk anything in adding to the love and admiration of his age, and more than one country.

> "Therefore to be possessed with double pomp,
> To guard a title that was rich before,
> To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
> To throw a perfume on the violet,
> To smooth the ice, or add another hue
> Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
> To seek the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish,
> Is wasteful and ridiculous excess."

BYRON.

[BORN 1788. DIED 1824.]

MACAULAY.

IT was in description and meditation that Byron excelled. "Description," as he said in "Don Juan," "was his forte." His manner is indeed peculiar, and almost unequalled; rapid sketches full of vigour; the selection happy, the strokes few and bold. In spite of the reverence which we feel for the genius of Mr Wordsworth, we cannot but think that the minuteness of his descriptions often diminishes their effect. He has accustomed himself to gaze on nature with the eye of a lover, to dwell on every feature, and to mark every change of aspect. Those beauties that strike the most negligent observer, and those which only a close attention discovers, are equally familiar to him, and are equally prominent in his poetry. The proverb of old Hesiod, that half is often more than the whole, is eminently applicable to description. Byron's descriptions, great as was their intrinsic merit, derived their principal interest from the feeling which always mingled with them. He was himself the beginning, the middle, and the end of all his own poetry—the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered as loose incognitos of Byron; and there is every reason to be-

lieve that he meant them to be so considered. The wonders of the outer world; the Tagus, with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom; the towers of Cintra, overhanging the shaggy forest of cork-trees and willows; the glaring marble of Pentelicus; the banks of the Rhine; the glaciers of Clarence; the sweet lake of Leman; the dell of Egeria, with its summer birds and rustling linnets; the shapeless ruins of Rome, overgrown with ivy and wallflowers; the stars, the sea, the mountains, all were mere accessories, the background of one dark and melancholy figure.

Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair. That Marah was never dry. No arts could sweeten, no draughts could exhaust its perennial waters of bitterness. Never was there such variety in monotony as that of Byron. From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat, that to be wretched is the destiny of all; that to be eminently wretched is the destiny of the eminent; that all the desires by which we are cursed lead alike to misery: if they are not gratified, to the misery of disappointment; if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. He always described himself as a man of the same kind with his favourite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone and could not be restored, but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befal him, here or hereafter.

What our grandchildren may think of the character of Lord Byron, as exhibited in his poetry, we will not pretend to guess. It is certain that the interest he excited during his life is without a parallel in literary history. The feeling

with which young readers of poetry regarded him can be conceived only by those who experienced it. To people who are not acquainted with real calamity, "nothing is so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy." This faint image of sorrow has in all ages been considered by young gentlemen as an agreeable excitement. Old gentlemen and middle-aged gentlemen have so many causes of sadness, that they are rarely inclined "to be as sad as night, only for wantonness." Indeed, they want the power almost as much as the inclination. We know very few persons engaged in active life who, even if they were to procure stools to be melancholy upon, and were to sit down with all the premeditation of Master Stephen, would be able to enjoy much of what somebody calls the "ecstasy of woe."

SHELLEY.

[BORN 1792. DIED 1822.]

DE QUINCEY.

THERE is no writer named amongst men, of whom, so much as of Percy Bysshe Shelley, it is difficult for a conscientious critic to speak with the profound respect, on the one hand, due to his exalted powers, and yet without offence, on the other, to feelings the most sacred, which too memorably he outraged. The indignation which this powerful young writer provoked had its root in no personal feelings—those might have been conciliated; in no worldly feelings—those would have proved transitory; but in feelings the holiest which brood over human interests, and which guard the sanctuary of religious truth. There have been affronts to the Founder of Christianity, offered too much in the temper of malignity. But Shelley's was worse; more bitter, and with less of countenance, even in show or shadow, from any fact, or insinuation of a fact, which Scripture suggests. In his "Queen Mab," he gives a dreadful portrait of God; and that no question might arise, of *what* God, he names Him—it is Jehovah. He asserts His existence; He affirms Him to be "an almighty God, and vengeful as almighty." He goes on to describe Him as "the omnipotent fiend," who "found none but slaves"—Israel in Egypt, no doubt—"to be his tools," and none but "a murderer"—

Moses, I presume—"to be his accomplice in crime." He introduces this dreadful Almighty as speaking, and as speaking thus—

> "From an eternity of idleness
> I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
> From nothing; rested; and created man."

But man He hates; and He goes on to curse him, till, at the intercession of "the murderer," who is electrified into pity for the human race by the very horror of the Divine curses, God promises to send His Son—only, however, for the benefit of a few. The Son appears. The poet pursues this incarnate God as a teacher of men; teaching, "in semblance," justice, truth, and peace; but, underneath all this, kindling "quenchless flames," which eventually were destined

> "To satiate, with the blood
> Of truth and freedom, his malignant soul."

This atrocious picture of the Deity, in His dealings with man, both pre-Christian and post-Christian, is certainly placed in the mouth of the Wandering Jew; but the internal evidence, as well as the collateral evidence from without, make it clear that the Jew,—whose version of Scriptural records nobody in the poem disputes,—here represents the person of the poet.

His feud with Christianity was a craze derived from some early wrench in his understanding, and made obstinate to the degree in which we find it, from having rooted itself in certain combinations of ideas that, once coalescing, could not be shaken loose; such as, that Christianity underpropped the corruptions of the earth, in the shape of wicked governments that might else have been overthrown, or of wicked priesthoods that, but for the shelter of shadowy and spiritual terrors, must have trembled before them they overawed. Kings

that were clothed in bloody robes; dark hierarchies that scowled upon poor children of the soil: these objects took up a permanent station in the background of Shelley's mind, not to be dispossessed more than the phantom of Banquo from the festival of Macbeth, and composed a towering Babylon of mystery that, to his belief, could not have flourished under any umbrage less vast than that of Christianity. Shelley's whole nature was altered and darkened when that theme arose: transfiguration fell upon him. He that was so gentle, became savage; he that breathed by the very lungs of Christianity,—that was so merciful, so full of tenderness and pity, of humility, of love, and forgiveness,—then raved and screamed like an idiot whom once I personally knew, when offended by a strain of music at the full of the moon. In both cases it was the sense of perfect beauty revealed under the sense of morbid estrangement. This it is, as I presume, which Mr Gilfillan alludes to in the following passage:—"On all *other* subjects the wisest of the wise, the gentlest of the gentle, the bravest of the brave; yet, when one topic was introduced, he became straightway insane, his eyes glared, his voice screamed, his hand vibrated frenzy." Everything was romantic in Shelley's short career; everything wore a tragic interest. From his childhood he moved through a succession of afflictions. Always craving for love, loving, and seeking to be loved, always he was destined to reap hatred from those with whom life had connected him.

Historians, Novelists, and Essayists.

BOCCACCIO.

[BORN 1313. DIED 1375.]

SISMONDI.

BORN in 1313, the natural son of a merchant of Florence, this early genius evinced from his earliest years a decided predilection for letters. He wrote verses, and manifested an extreme aversion to trade. He at length obtained permission to devote himself wholly to literature, and fixed on Naples as his place of residence, where letters then flourished under the powerful protection of Robert, the reigning monarch. He was quickly initiated in all the sciences at that time taught. In 1341 he assisted at the celebrated examination of Petrarch, which preceded his coronation at Rome, and from that time a friendship arose between him and the poet, which terminated only with their lives. At this period Boccaccio, distinguished no less for the elegance of his person than for the brilliancy of his wit, and devoted to pleasure, formed an attachment to a natural daughter of King Robert, named Maria, who for

several years had been the wife of a Neapolitan gentleman. This lady he has celebrated in his writings under the name of Fiammetta. In the attachment of Boccaccio we must not look for that purity or delicacy which distinguished Petrarch in his love for Laura. His life was afterwards occupied by his public employment in several embassies, by the duties which the increasing friendship for Petrarch imposed on him, and by the constant and indefatigable labours to which he devoted himself for the advancement of letters.

The "Decameron," the work to which Boccaccio is at the present day indebted for his highest celebrity, is a collection of one hundred novels or tales. He has ingeniously united them under the supposition of a party formed in the dreadful pestilence of 1345, composed of a number of cavaliers, and young, intelligent, and accomplished women, retired to a delightful part to escape the contagion. The description of the enchanting country in the neighbourhood of Florence, where these gay recluses established themselves; the records of their walks, their numerous fêtes and their repasts, afforded Boccaccio an opportunity for displaying all the treasures of his powerful and easy pen. These stories, which are varied with infinite art, as well in subject as in style, from the most pathetic and tender to the most sportive, and, unfortunately, the most licentious, exhibit a wonderful power of narration; and his description of the plague in Florence, which serves as an introduction to them, may be ranked with the most celebrated historical descriptions which have descended to us. The perfect truth of colouring, the exquisite choice of circumstances, calculated to produce the deepest impression, and which place before our eyes the most repulsive scenes without exciting disgust; and the emotion of the writer, which insensibly pervades every part,

give to this fiction that true eloquence of history, which in Thucydides animates the relation of the plague in Athens.

With regard to the stories themselves, it would be difficult to convey an idea of them by extracts, and impossible to preserve in a translation the merits of their style. The praise of Boccaccio consists in the perfect purity of his language, in his elegance, his grace, and, above all, in that *naïveté* which is the chief merit of narration, and the peculiar charm of the Italian tongue. Unfortunately, Boccaccio did not prescribe to himself the same purity in his images as in phraseology. The character of his work is light and sportive. He has inserted in it a great number of tales of gallantry; he has exhausted his powers of ridicule upon the duped husband, on the depraved and depraving monks, and on subjects in morals and religious worship which he himself regarded as sacred; and his reputation is thus little in harmony with the real tenor of his conduct.

A romance of Boccaccio, called the "Fiammetta," is, after the Tales, the most celebrated of his works. Boccaccio may be considered as the inventor of the love romances. This species of composition was wholly unknown to antiquity. The Byzantine Greeks, indeed, possessed some romances, which have since reached us. The chivalric romances of the French had, it is true, a connection with the class of which Boccaccio may be considered the creator. But instead of having recourse to marvellous incidents which might engage the imagination, he has drawn his resources from the human heart and passions.

RABELAIS.

[BORN 1495. DIED 1553.]

HAZLITT.

HE loved absurdity, exaggerated it with supreme satisfaction, luxuriated in its endless varieties, rioted in nonsense, "reigned there, and revelled." He dwelt in the absurd and ludicrous for the pleasure they gave him, not for the pain. He lived upon laughter, and died laughing. He indulged his vein, and took his full swing of folly. He did not baulk his fancy or his readers. His wit was to him as "*riches fineless;*" he saw no end of his wealth in that way, and set no limits to his extravagance; he was communicative, prodigal, boundless, and inexhaustible. His were the saturnalia of wit, the riches and the royalty, the health and the long life. He is intoxicated with gaiety and with folly. His animal spirits drown him in a flood of mirth; his blood courses up and down his veins like wine. His thirst of enjoyment is as great as his thirst for drink; his appetite for good things of all sorts is unsatisfied, and there is a never-ending supply. *Discourse is dry;* so they moisten their words in their cups, and relish their dry jests with plenty of botargo and dried neats' tongues. It is like Camacho's wedding in "Don Quixote," where Sancho ladled out whole pullets and fat geese from the soup-kettle at a pull. The flagons are set a running, their tongues

wag at the same time, and their mirth flows as a river. How Friar John roars and lays about him in the vineyard! How Panurge whines in the storm, and how dexterously he contrives to drive the sheep overboard! How much Pantagruel behaves like a wise king! How Gargantua mewls, and pules, and slabbers his nurse, and demeans himself most like a royal infant! What provinces he devours! What seas he drinks up! How he eats, drinks, and sleeps!—sleeps, eats, and drinks! The style of Rabelais is no less prodigious than his matter. His words are of marrow, unctuous, dropping fatness. He was a mad wag, the king of good fellows, and prince of practical philosophers. Rabelais was a Frenchman of the old school, Voltaire of the new. The wit of the one arose from an exuberance of enjoyment; of the other, from an excess of indifference, real or assumed.

MONTAIGNE.

[BORN 1533. DIED 1592.]

HALLAM.

THE essays of Montaigne, the first edition of which appeared at Bordeaux in 1580, make in several respects an epoch in literature, less on account of their real importance, or the novel truths they contain, than of their influence upon the tastes and the opinions of Europe. They are the first *provocatio ad populum*, the first appeal from the porch and the academy to the haunts of busy and of idle men, the first book that taught the unlearned reader to observe and reflect for himself on questions of moral philosophy. In an age when every topic of this nature was treated systematically, and in a didactic form, he broke out without the connection of chapters, with all the digressions that levity and garrulous egotism could suggest, with a very delightful, but at that time unusual rapidity of transition from seriousness to gaiety. No prose writer of the sixteenth century has been so generally read, nor probably has given so much delight. Whatever may be our estimate of Montaigne as a philosopher,—a name which he was far from arrogating,—there will be but one opinion of the felicity and brightness of his genius.

It is a striking proof of these qualities, that in reading his essays we can hardly help believing him to have struck out

all his thoughts by a spontaneous effort of his mind, and to have fallen afterwards upon his quotations and examples by a happy accident. I have little doubt but that the process was different, and that either by dint of memory, though he absolutely disclaims the possessing a good one, or by the usual mode of commonplacing, he had made his reading instrumental to excite his own ingenious and fearless understanding. His extent of learning was by no means great for that age, but the whole of it was brought to bear on his object; and it is a proof of Montaigne's independence of mind, that while a vast mass of erudition was the only passport to fame, he read no authors but such as were most fitted to his own habits of thinking. Hence he displays an unity or self-existence which we seldom find so complete in other writers. His quotations, though perhaps they make more than one-half of his essays, seem parts of himself, and are like limbs of his own mind, which could not be separated without laceration. But over all is spread a charm of a fascinating simplicity, and an apparent abandonment of the whole man to the easy inspiration of genius, combined with a good nature, though rather too epicurean and destitute of moral energy, which for that very reason made him a favourite with men of similar dispositions, for whom courts and camps and country mansions were the proper soil.

Montaigne is superior to any of the ancients in liveliness, in that careless and rapid style, where one thought springs naturally but not consecutively from another, by analogical rather than deductive connection; so that, while the reader seems to be following a train of arguments, he is imperceptibly hurried to a distance by some contingent association. He sometimes makes a show of coming back from his excursions; but he has generally exhausted himself before he

does so. This is what men love to practise—not advantageously for their severer studies—in their own thoughts: they love to follow the casual associations that lead them through pleasant labyrinths, as one riding along the high road is apt to deviate a little into the woods, though it may sometimes happen that he will lose his way, and find himself far remote from his inn. And such is the conversational style of lively, eloquent old men. We converse with Montaigne, or rather hear him talk; it is almost impossible to read his essays without thinking that he speaks to us. We see his cheerful brow, his sparkling eye, his negligent but gentlemanly demeanour. We picture him in his arm-chair with his few books round the room, and Plutarch on the table.



CERVANTES.

[BORN 1547.. DIED 1616.]

SISMONDI.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDIA, born in poverty and obscurity, in 1549, at Alcala de Henares, assumed the title of hidalgo, or gentleman; but nothing is known of his family, or early education. The only circumstance relative to this with which we are acquainted is, that he was sent to a school at Madrid, where he acquired some knowledge of the classics. During this period, he read with extreme avidity all the poets and romance writers of Spain, and set the highest value, even at this early period of his life, on elegance of diction, and on the purity of the Castilian language. He wrote, in his youth, a number of poems and romances, as well as a pastoral romance, entitled "Filena," which has been lost. The entire want of fortune compelling him to travel in search of a livelihood, he fell into slavery, and was ransomed in 1581. Thus did Cervantes return to his country, maimed, ruined, and friendless, without prospects and without resources; but such was the strength of his mind, the liveliness of his temper, and the fire of his imagination, that he not only soon gained the means of livelihood, but acquired a high reputation by his dramatic genius, which he exercised in the composition of comedies and tragedies, all of which were received with loud

approbation by the public. It was in the year 1584, and, consequently, when he was thirty-five years of age, that he published his "Galatea;" and about the same time he gave to the theatre about thirty comedies, which have not been preserved. The rivalry of Lope de Vega, who, about the same period, met with prodigious success, humiliated him a little, and induced him to lay aside his pen. He was married, and he was then probably living on the dowry which his wife had brought him.

He gave to the world, in 1605, the first part of his "Don Quixote." The success of this work was incredible—30,000 copies are said to have been struck off in the author's lifetime. It was translated into all languages, and was loudly praised by all classes of readers. Philip III. himself, seeing from his balcony a student walking along the banks of the Mançanares, and, as he read, bursting into involuntary fits of laughter, exclaimed to his courtiers, "that the man was mad, unless he was reading 'Don Quixote.'" Neither Philip III., however, nor any of his courtiers, thought fit to grant any assistance to an indigent author, who was the glory of Spain, and had written a work so full of comic talent within the walls of a prison, where he was confined for debt.

This diverting tissue of laughable and original adventures will, therefore, only furnish us with serious reflections. If we wish to taste all the humour which is afforded by the heroism of the Knight and the terror of the Squire, when, in the middle of a dark night, they hear the sound of a falling mill, we must read "Don Quixote" itself. No extract could give any idea of the adventures at the inn, which Don Quixote took for an enchanted castle, and where Sancho was tossed in a blanket. It is in the work itself, and there only, we can enjoy the wit of the fine contrast between the gravity, the

measured language, and the manners of Don Quixote, and the ignorance and vulgarity of Sancho. The most striking feature in the composition of "Don Quixote" is the perpetual contrast between what may be called the poetical and the prosaic spirit. The imagination, the feelings, and all the general qualities, tend to raise Don Quixote in our esteem. Men of elevated minds make it the object of their lives to defend the weak, to aid the oppressed, to be the champions of justice and innocence. Like Don Quixote, they everywhere discover the image of those virtues which they worship. They believe that disinterestedness, nobility, courage, and chivalry are still in existence. Without calculating upon their own powers, they expose themselves in the service of the ungrateful, and sacrifice themselves to laws and principles altogether imaginary. The devotion of heroism and the illusions of virtue are the noblest and most affecting themes in the history of the human race. They are the true subjects of the highest species of poetry, which is nothing but the representation of disinterested feelings. A character, however, which excites our admiration when viewed from an elevated situation, is often ridiculous when seen from the level of the earth. Error is a fertile source of laughter; and a man who sees nothing around him but heroism and chivalry, is certainly sufficiently prone to error. Next to such errors as these, striking contrasts are perhaps the most productive of risible effects; and nothing can be more powerfully contrasted than poetry and prose; the romance of the imagination, and the petty details of social life; the valour, and the great appetite of the hero; the palace of Armida, and an inn; the enchanted princesses, and Maritorna.

PASCAL.

[BORN 1623. DIED 1662.]

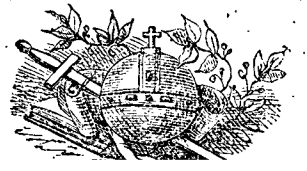
HALLAM.

AMONG those who sustained the truths of Christianity by argument rather than authority, the first place, both in order of time and excellence, is due to Pascal, though his thoughts were not published till 1670. These are to be ranked, as a memorial of his genius, above the provincial letters, though some have asserted the contrary. They burn with an intense light. Condensed in expression, sublime, energetic, rapid, they hurry away the reader, till he is scarce able or willing to distinguish the sophisms from the truth which they contain. For that many of them are incapable of bearing a calm scrutiny, is very manifest to those who apply such a test. The notes of Voltaire, though always intended to distract, are sometimes unanswerable; but the splendour of Pascal's eloquence absolutely annihilates, in effect on the general reader, even this antagonist.

The thoughts of Pascal on religion abound in proofs of his acuteness and originality—an orginality much more striking, when we recollect that the subject had not been discussed, as it has since, but with an intermixture of some sophistical and questionable positions. Several of them have a secret reference to the famous cure of his niece, Mademoiselle Perier, by the holy thorn. But he is embar-

rassed with the difficult question, whether miraculous events are sure tests of the doctrine which they support, and is not wholly consistent in his reasonings, or satisfactory in his distinctions. I am unable to pronounce whether Pascal's other observations on the rational proofs of Christianity are as original as they are frequently ingenious and powerful. But the leading principle of Pascal's theology, that from which he deduces the necessary truth of revelation, is the fallen nature of mankind; dwelling less upon Scriptural proofs, which he takes for granted, than on the evidences which he supposes man himself to supply. Nothing, however, can be more dissimilar than his beautiful visions to the vulgar Calvanism of the pulpit. It is not the sordid, grovelling, degraded Caliban of that school, but the ruined archangel that he delights to paint. Man is so great, that his greatness is manifest even in his knowledge of his own misery. A tree does not know itself to be miserable. It is true that to know ourselves to be miserable is misery; but still it is greatness to know it. All his misery proves his greatness; it is the misery of a great lord, of a king, dispossessed of his own. Man is the feeblest branch of nature, but it is a branch that thinks. He requires not the universe to crush him. He may be killed by a vapour, by a drop of water. But if the whole universe should crush him, he would be nobler than that which causes his death, because he knows that he is dying, and the universe would not know its power over him. This is very evidently sophistical and declamatory, but it is the sophistry of a fine imagination. It would be easy, however, to find better passages. The dominant idea recurs in almost every page of Pascal. His melancholy genius plays in wild and rapid flashes, like lightning round the scathed oak, about the fallen greatness of man. He perceives every

characteristic of his nature under these conditions; they are the solution of every problem, the clearing up of every evil that perplexes us. "Man," he says very finely, "has a secret instinct that leads him to seek diversion and employment from without, which springs from the sense of his continual misery. And he has another secret instinct remaining from the greatness of his original nature, which teaches him that happiness can only exist in repose. And from these two contrary instincts there arises in him an obscure propensity concealed in his soul, which prompts him to seek repose through agitation, and even to fancy that the contentment he does not enjoy will be found, if, by struggling yet a little longer, he can open a door to rest."



SWIFT.

[BORN 1667. DIED 1745.]

JEFFREY.

IN his personal character, we find the same arrogance and disdain of mankind leading to profligate ambition and scurrility in public life, and to domineering and selfish habits in private. His character seems to have been radically overbearing and tyrannical; for though, like other tyrants, he could stoop low enough where his interests required, it was his delight to exact an explicit compliance with his humours and fancies, and to impose upon all round him the task of observing and accommodating themselves to his habits, without the slightest regard to their convenience or comfort. Wherever he came, the ordinary forms of society were to give way to his pleasure, and everything, even to the domestic arrangements of a family, to be suspended for his caprice. If he was to be introduced to a person of rank, he insisted that the first advances and the first visit should be made to him. If he went to see a friend in the country, he would order an old tree to be cut down if it obstructed the view from his window, and was never at his ease unless he was allowed to give nicknames to the lady of the house, and make lampoons upon his acquaintance. On going for the first time into any family, he frequently prescribed before hand the hours for

their meals, sleep, or exercise, and insisted rigorously upon the literal fulfilment of the capitulation. From his intimates he uniformly exacted the most implicit submission to all his whims and absurdities, and carried his prerogative so far that he sometimes used to chase the Grattans and other accommodating friends through the apartments of the deanery, and up and down stairs, driving them like horses with a large whip, till he thought he had enough of exercise. Even considered merely as a manner assumed to try the character of those with whom he lived, it was a test which no one but a tyrant could think himself entitled to apply.

A singular contrast to the rudeness and arrogance of this behaviour to his friends and dependants, is afforded by the instances of extravagant adulation and base humility which occur in his addresses to those upon whom his fortunes depended. After he gets into the society of Bolingbroke and Oxford, and up to the age of forty, these are composed in something of a better taste; but the true models are to be found in his addresses to Sir William Temple, the first and most honoured of his patrons, upon whose sickness and recovery he has indited a heroic epistle and a Pindaric ode, more fulsome and extravagant than anything that had then proceeded from the pen even of a poet laureate, and to whom, after he had left his family in bad humour, he sends a miserable epistle, entreating a certificate of character in terms which are scarcely consistent with the consciousness of deserving it.

With the consciousness of having barbarously destroyed all the women for whom he had ever professed affection, it is not wonderful that his latter days should have been overshadowed with gloom and dejection; but it was not the depression of late regret or unavailing self-condemnation

that darkened his closing scene. It was but the rancour of disappointed ambition, and the bitterness of proud misanthropy; and we verily believe, that if his party had got again into power, and given him the preferment he expected, the pride and joy of his vindictive triumph would have been but little alloyed by the remembrance of the innocent and accomplished women, of whom we have no hesitation to pronounce him the murderer.

As regards his literary genius, on the subjects to which he confines himself he is unquestionably a strong, masculine, and perspicuous writer. He is never finical, fantastic, or absurd, takes advantage of no equivocations in argument, and puts on no tawdriness for ornament. Dealing always with particulars, he is safe from all great and systematic mistakes; and, in fact, reasons mostly in a series of small and minute propositions, in the handling of which dexterity is more requisite than genius, and practical good sense, with an exact knowledge of transactions, of far more importance than profound and high-reaching judgment. He did not write history or philosophy, but party pamphlets and journals; not satire, but particular lampoons; not pleasantries for all mankind, but jokes for a particular circle. Of his style, it has been usual to speak with great, and, we think, exaggerated praise. It is less mellow than Dryden's; less elegant than Pope's or Addison's; less free and noble than Lord Bolingbroke's; and utterly without the glow and loftiness which belonged to our earlier masters. In humour and in irony, and in the talent of debasing and defiling what he hated, we join with all the world in thinking the Dean of St Patrick's without a rival. His humour, though easily marked and peculiar, is not to be easily defined. The nearest description we can give of it would make it consist

in expressing sentiments the most absurd and ridiculous, the most shocking and atrocious, or sometimes the most energetic and original, in a sort of composed, calm, and unconscious way, as if they were plain, undeniable, commonplace truths, which no person could dispute, or expect to gain credit for by announcing; and in maintaining them always in the gravest, most familiar language, with a consistency which sometimes palliates those extravagances, and a kind of perverted ingenuity which seems to give pledge for their sincerity.



ADDISON.

[BORN 1672. DIED 171[illegible]

JOHNSON.

IF any judgment be made from his books, nothing will be found in his moral character but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind, indeed, less extensive than his, will show that to write and to live are very different. Many who praise virtue, do no more than praise it. Yet it is reasonable to believe that Addison's professions and practice were at no great variance, since, amidst that storm of faction in which most of his life was passed,—though his station made him conspicuous, and his activity made him formidable,—the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies. Of those with whom interest or opinion united him, he had not only the esteem but the kindness; and of others whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.

It is justly observed by Tickell, that he employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and, from his time, it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity,

and taught virtue not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character above all Greek, above all Roman fame. No greater felicity can genius attain, than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having turned many to righteousness.

As a describer of life and manners, Mr Addison must be allowed to stand perhaps the first in the first rank. His humour is so peculiar to himself, and is so happily diffused, as to give the grace of novelty to domestic scenes and daily occurrences. He never o'ersteps the modesty of nature, or raises merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures neither divert by distortion, nor amaze by aggravation. He copies life with so much fidelity, that he can hardly be said to invent. Yet his exhibitions have an air so much original, that it is difficult to suppose them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wisdom, he may be confidently followed. His religion has nothing in it enthusiastic or superstitious; He appears neither weakly credulous, nor wantonly sceptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor implacably rigid. All the enchantments of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest—the care of pleasing the author of his being. Truth is shown sometimes as the phantom of a vision, sometimes appears half veiled in an allegory, sometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy, and sometimes steps forth in the confidence of reason. She wears a thousand dresses, and in all is pleasing.

His prose is the model of the middle style—on grave sub-

jects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling. Pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration,—always equable and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences,—his page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour. It seems to have been his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation. Yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude nor affected brevity; his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.



VOLTAIRE.

[BORN 1694. DIED 1778].

HAZLITT.

HAD no enthusiasm for one thing or another; he made light of everything. In his hands all things turn to chaff and dross, as the pieces of silver money in the "Arabian Nights" were changed by the hands of the enchanter into little dry, crumbling leaves. He is a Parisian. He never exaggerates, is never violent: he treats things with the most provoking *sang froid*, and expresses his contempt by the most indirect hints, and in the fewest words, as if he hardly thought them worth even his contempt. He retains complete possession of himself and his subject. He does not effect his purpose by the eagerness of his blows, but by the delicacy of his tact. The personal wound he inflicted was so fine as scarcely to be felt, till it rankled and festered in its "mortal consequences." His callousness was an excellent foil for the antagonists he had mostly to deal with. He took knaves and fools on his shield well. He stole away its cloak from grave imposture. If he reduced other things below their true value, making them seem worthless and hollow, he did not degrade the pretensions of tyranny and superstition below their true value, by making them seem utterly worthless and hollow, as contemptible as they were odious. This was the service he rendered to truth and

mankind. His "Candide" is a masterpiece of wit. It has been called "the dull product of a scoffer's pen;" but after reading the "Excursion," few people will think it dull. It is in the most perfect keeping, and without any appearance of effort. Every sentence tells, and the whole reads like one sentence. There is something sublime in Martin's sceptical indifference to moral good and evil. It is the repose of the grave. It is better to suffer this living death than a living martyrdom. "Nothing can touch him further." The moral of "Candide," such as it is, is the same as that of "Rasselas"—the execution is different. Voltaire says, "a great book is a great evil." Dr Johnson would have laboured this simple apophthegm into a voluminous commonplace. Voltaire's Traveller (in another work), being asked whether he likes black or white mutton best, replies that he is indifferent, provided it is tender. Dr Johnson did not get at a conclusion in so short a way as this. If Voltaire's licentiousness is objected to, I say, let it be placed to its true account—the manners of the age and court in which he lived. The lords and ladies of the bed-chamber, in the reign of Louis XV., found no fault with the immoral tendency of the writings; why, then, should our modern purists quarrel with them?

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

[BORN 1709. DIED 1784.]

SIR J. MACKINTOSH.

IN early youth, Samuel Johnson had resisted the most severe tests of probity. Neither the extreme poverty, nor the uncertain income to which the virtue of so many men of letters has yielded, even in the slightest degree weakened his integrity, or lowered the dignity of his independence. His moral principles partook of the vigour of his understanding. He was conscientious, sincere, determined; and his pride was no more than a steady consciousness of superiority in the most valuable qualities of human nature. His friendships were not only firm, but generous and tender, beneath a rugged exterior. He wounded none of those feelings which the habits of his life enabled him to estimate; but he had become too hardened by serious distress not to contract some disregard for those minor delicacies, which become so keenly sensible in a calm and prosperous fortune. He was a Tory, not without some propensities towards Jacobitism; and a High Churchman, with more attachment to ecclesiastical authority and a splendid worship than is quite consistent with the spirit of Protestantism. On these subjects, he neither permitted himself to doubt, nor tolerated differences of opinion among others. But the vigour of his understanding is no more to be esti-

mated by his opinions on subjects where it was bound by his prejudices, than the strength of a man's body by the efforts of a limb in fetters. His conversation, which was one of the most powerful instruments of his extensive influence, was artificial, dogmatical, sententious, and poignant; adapted with the most admirable versatility to every subject as it arose, and distinguished by an almost unparalleled power of serious repartee. He seems to have considered himself as a kind of colloquial magistrate, who inflicted severe punishment from just policy. His course of life led him to treat those sensibilities, which such severity wounds, as fantastic and effeminate; and he entered society too late to acquire those habits of politeness which are a substitute for natural delicacy.

As the mind of Johnson was robust, neither nimble nor graceful, so his style, though sometimes significant, nervous, and even majestic, was void of all grace and ease; and being the most unlike of all styles to the natural effusion of a cultivated mind, had the least pretensions to the praise of eloquence. During the period of style, now near its close, in which he was a favourite model, a stiff symmetry and tedious monotony succeeded to that various music with which the taste of Addison diversified his periods, and to that natural imagery which his beautiful genius seemed, with graceful negligence, to scatter over his compositions.

Whenever understanding alone is sufficient for poetical criticism, the decisions of Johnson are generally right. But the beauties of poetry must be felt before their causes be investigated. There is a poetical sensibility which, in the progress of the mind, becomes as distinct a power as a musical ear or a picturesque eye. Without a considerable degree of this sensibility, it is as vain for a man of the greatest

understanding to speak of the highest beauties of poetry, as it is for a blind man to speak of colour. But to cultivate such a talent was wholly foreign from the worldly sagacity and stern shrewdness of Johnson. As in his judgments of life and character, so in his criticism in poetry, he was a sort of freethinker. He suspected the refined of affectation, he rejected the enthusiastic as absurd, and he took it for granted that the mysterious was unintelligible. He came into the world when the school of Dryden and Pope gave the law to English poetry. In that school he had himself learned to be a lofty and vigorous declaimer in harmonious verse; beyond that school, his enforced admiration perhaps scarcely soared; and his highest effort of criticism was his noble panegyric on Dryden. His criticism owed its popularity as much to its defects as to its excellences. It was on a level with the majority of readers, persons of good sense and information, but of no exquisite sensibility; and to their minds it derived a false appearance of solidity from that very narrowness which excluded those grander efforts of imagination, to which Aristotle and Bacon have confined the name of poetry.

DAVID HUME.

[BORN 1711. DIED 1776.]

PROFESSOR NICHOL.

THE place and functions of the metaphysical speculations of this great thinker are not only peculiar but unique in the history of modern philosophy. At the period in question, mental science had fallen into the lowest possible state, not in Britain merely, but over Europe, that, viz., of a conscious inconsistency; principles were accepted, and conclusions evaded; beliefs timidly relied on; betwixt which, and all grounds of certainty then acknowledged, lay an impassable hiatus. The sensational philosophy, always agreeable to the practical tendencies of the English mind, had just reached its culmination under guidance of the genius and earnestness of John Locke; and we were undergoing its consequences, in the dwarfing of systematic morals, and the gradual impoverishment of religion—saving ourselves, as to the mere forms of faith, by refuge in tradition, or, what is worse than all, willing subjects to gross paralogisms. Gifted with an intellect clear and fearless, Hume carried principles remorselessly to their consequences, and proved beyond question, that on the grounds of existing philosophy, all belief must disappear. If he reached universal scepticism, it may be said that he yet had a faith sounder than any in the philosophy he destroyed; he trusted in the

only ground of human certainty—human reason; and had the rare courage to follow where it seemed to lead. It is not easy to conceive the consternation spread through every region of existing speculation by the "Essay on the Idea of a Necessary Connection;" the "Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals;" the "Natural History of Religion," and other compositions. His blows resounded accordingly through all cultivated society. It was heard everywhere with amazement that, by a logic apparently invincible, the basis of all certainty respecting Man, Nature, God, had been destroyed, and that doubt irremediable was the sole inheritance of our race. It is needless to say that the resting-place of humanity was saved, but not by invalidating the reasoning of the trenchant Scotchman. Hume's triumph was complete; it was only the existing philosophy he laid in ruins.

The clearness of intellect and peculiar sagacity that distinguished Hume shone out nowhere more brightly than in his political and historical writings; although we discern here, perhaps, more palpably those defects which fitted him for the task of destroyer. Eager to generalise, skilful as sagacious, and incapable of being influenced by surrounding opinions, we find him in his political essays steadily surveying and defining most of those great truths regarding commerce, which Adam Smith afterwards elaborated in the "Wealth of Nations," and which the civilised world at length accepts as its guide. Nor will a time ever come when the general reflections strewn through every page of the "History of England," will cease to instruct and elevate the statesman. The enduring nature of the History, indeed, is that of a rich philosophical treatise, not that of a history, in the true significance of that term; nor can anything be imagined more incongruous than its usual connection on the

book-shelf with a set of continuations and chronicles more or less accurate in dates, but dry in wisdom as in style.

The character of this distinguished person has been misunderstood and misrepresented, alike by friends and foes. His nature was a great one, but not developed in some vital directions. No man of his time had a stronger understanding, larger intellectual capacity, finer tastes, higher courage, or a more rooted love of independence. His temperament, too, was greatly enviable. He had no violent passions, so that he was tried by few temptations. He was delicate and modest. He had no malignity. He was candid and kindly. Still, it is impossible to concur with Adam Smith, that "he approached as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as perhaps the frailty of human nature will permit." His fatal deficiency was, that he had no sympathy with the largest, the profoundest portion of our human nature. He treated the Puritans as he did, not through malignity, but because he could not appreciate them. He knew nothing of the value of sacrifice to the Unseen: the morals he understood were simple calculations of visible consequences. In many respects, Hume was a wise man; but we must not set down his dislike of enthusiasm to the repose and tranquillity of wisdom. The highest wisdom is indeed seldom enthusiastic, because it has discerned the meaning of "the law of limitations," that in this various and complex universe no principle acts singly, or ought to enjoy absolute rule. Hume had not this wisdom. He merely disliked enthusiasm, because he had no part or parcel with the principle which sustained those enthusiasts, as with their life-blood they purchased the liberties of England.

ROUSSEAU.

[BORN 1712. DIED 1778.]

CARLYLE.



HIGH but narrow, contracted intensity in his face; bony brows; deep strait-set eyes, in which there is something bewildered-looking—bewildered, peering with lynx eagerness; a face full of misery, even ignoble misery, and also of the antagonism against that; something mean, plebeian there, redeemed only by intensity: the face of what is called a fanatic. A sadly contracted hero we name him, because, with all his drawbacks, and these are many, he has the first and chief characteristic of a hero: he is heartily in earnest. In earnest, if ever man was, as none of these French *Philosophes* were; nay, one would say of an earnestness too great for his otherwise sensitive, rather feeble nature; and which, indeed, in the end drove him into the strangest incoherences, almost delirations. These had come at last to be a kind of madness in him: his ideas possessed him like demons, hurried himself so about, drove him over steep places.

The fault and misery of Rousseau was what we easily name by a word—*egoism;* which is, indeed, the source and summary of all faults and miseries whatsoever. He had not perfected himself into victory over mere desire; a mean

hunger in many sorts was still the motive-principle of him. I am afraid he was a very vain man, hungry for the praises of men. You remember Genlis' experience of him. She took Jean Jacques to the theatre, he bargaining for a strict incognito. "He would not be seen there for the world." The curtain did happen nevertheless to be drawn aside; the pit recognised Jean Jacques, but took no great notice of him. He expressed the bitterest indignation, gloomed all evening, spoke no other than surly words. The glib countess remained entirely convinced that his anger was not at being seen, but at not being applauded when seen. How the whole nature of the man is poisoned! nothing but suspicion, self-isolation, fierce moody ways. He could not live with anybody. A man of some rank from the country, who visited him often, and used to sit with him, expressing all reverence and affection for him, comes one day, finds Jean Jacques full of the sourest, unintelligible humour. "Monsieur," said Jean Jacques, with flaming eyes, "I know why you come here. You come to see what a poor life I lead, how little there is in my poor pot that is boiling there. Well, look into the pot; there is half a pound of meat, one carrot, and three onions; that is all: go and tell the whole world that, if you like, Monsieur." A man of this sort was far gone. The whole world got itself supplied with anecdotes for light laughter, for a certain theatrical interest, from those perversions and contortions of poor Jean Jacques. Alas, to him they were not laughing or theatrical: too real to him. The contortions of a dying gladiator; the crowded amphitheatre looks on with entertainment, but the gladiator is in agonies, and dying.

And yet this Rousseau, as we say, with his passionate appeals to mothers, with his *contrat-social*, with his celebra-

tions of nature, even of savage life in nature, did once more touch upon reality, struggle towards reality, was doing the function of a prophet to his time, as *he* could, and as the time could. Strangely, through all that defacement, degradation, and almost madness, there is in the inmost heart of poor Rousseau a spark of real heavenly fire. Once more out of the element of that withered, mocking philosophism, scepticism, and persiflage, there has arisen in this man the ineradicable feeling and knowledge that this life of ours is *true*—not a scepticism, theorem, or persiflage, but a fact, an awful reality. Nature had made that revelation to him, had ordered him to speak it out. He got it spoken out, if not well and clearly, then ill and dimly, as clearly as he could. Nay, what are all errors and perversities of his, even those stealings of ribbons, aimless confused miseries and vagabondisms, if we will interpret them kindly, but the blinkard dazzlement and staggerings to and fro of a man sent on a errand he is too weak for, by a path he cannot yet find. Men are led by strange ways. One should have tolerance for a man—hope of him; leave him to try yet what he will do. While life lasts, hope lasts for every man.

Of Rousseau's literary talents, greatly celebrated still among his countrymen, I don't say much. His books, like himself, are what I call unhealthy, not the good sort of books. There is a sensuality in Rousseau. Combined with such an intellectual gift as his, it makes pictures of a certain gorgeous attractiveness, but they are not genuinely poetical. Not white sun-light, something operatic, a kind of rose-pink, artificial bedizenment. It is frequent, or rather it is universal among the French since his time. Madame de Staël has something of it. St Pierre, and down onwards to the present astonishing convulsionary "Literature of Desperation," it is

everywhere abundant. Look at a Shakespeare, at a Goethe, even at a Walter Scott. He who has once seen into this, has seen the difference of the True from the Sham-true, and will discriminate them ever afterwards.



GOLDSMITH.

[BORN 1728. DIED 1774.]

JOHNSTONE.

IF the best poetry be that which gives the most pleasure to the greatest number of readers, there are few poetical characters that rank higher than the author of the "Deserted Village" and the "Traveller;" and, if anything can heighten this pleasure, it must be an intimate knowledge of the amusing vanities and eccentricities of the poet. Goldsmith discovered early the imprudence and excessive eccentricity of his disposition; instead of declining to take orders, it is stated that he was refused ordination, from appearing before the bishop, on the solemn occasion, in a pair of flaming red breeches. In the interval between leaving Trinity College and going to Edinburgh, he became a tutor in a family, where he felt himself so ill at ease, that, having earned about £30, he instantly bought a horse, and set forth in quest of adventures, and with the ridiculous scheme of establishing himself in life. By a narrow chance he was prevented from sailing to America; and at the end of six weeks, after a series of whimsical adventures, he returned to his widowed mother without a penny in his pocket, and mounted on an old garron, which he named Fiddleback. Nothing can be more characteristic of this Irish son of the Muses, than the blended humour and sim-

plicity of his observation to his mother, on the grave displeasure to which she had listened to the recital of his adventures. "And now, my dear mother, having struggled so hard to come home, I wonder you are not more rejoiced to see me."

Kind relatives, who had already done much for Goldsmith, did not yet desert him. With £50 in his pocket, he set out for the Temple to commence the study of law, but never got beyond Dublin, where, having spent all his money, or been pillaged at the gaming-table, to which he had ever an unhappy propensity, the disgraced prodigal once more returned to his mother.

After a period of thought and penitence he was sent to Edinburgh, where he attended medical lectures as little, and amused himself as much as he could. From Edinburgh he was forced to remove precipitately, in consequence of being security for a friend's debt; and he proposed finishing his medical studies at Leyden, for which purpose he very characteristically sailed for Bordeaux. But Leyden he reached at last; and after spending all his money, borrowed from a friend, in the purchase of tulip-roots—a bargain, all circumstances considered, even surpassing Moses' gross of green spectacles with silver rims, he set out on the tour of France, or of the globe, for what he knew, "with one clean shirt, and no money in his pocket." It is constantly affirmed that, in this expedition, he often procured lodging and food by playing the flute; and it is certain that he made his way through France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland mostly on foot, and with very slender means. From Switzerland he transmitted the outline of the "Traveller" to his brother Henry. He afterwards became a favourite member of the celebrated Literary Club, and was to that illustrious associa-

tion the fondling that Gay had been to the wits of a former age—loved, caressed, and laughed at.

The character of Goldsmith is a moral anomaly, and goes further than that of most men to establish the doctrines of the modern phrenologists; for with some moral qualities in excess, others seem totally awanting. In the phraseology of that sect, his benevolence and self-esteem were large; his conscientiousness was small indeed. "Madam," said Johnson, speaking of Goldsmith to a literary lady, "Noll will lie through an inch board." So odd were his manners, and so much at variance with his genius, that one of his friends usually called him "an inspired idiot;" and Johnson, who, with a perfect knowledge of his character and failings, sincerely loved the man, has said, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, nor more wise than when he had." It is not less surprising to find that a man so exquisitely alive to the ridiculous, even in its most hidden intricacies and delicate shadings, as Goldsmith appears in his writings, should, in downright simplicity and unconsciousness, have exhibited in his own person and conduct so many points of utter laughable absurdity. His own peach-coloured coat, in Boswell's narrative, equals Moses' suit of thunder and lightning, the tulip speculation, Moses' bargain of green spectacles, and the purchase of Fiddleback—any transaction of the Vicar with Mr Jenkins. "Poor Goldsmith," says one of his admirers, "how happy he made others! how unhappy he was himself! he never had the pleasure of reading his own works." Before his death his debts amounted to £2000. "Was," says Johnson, "ever poet so trusted before?"

GIBBON.

[BORN 1737. DIED 1794.]

PRESCOTT.

THERE is no writer who exhibits more distinctly the full development of the principles of modern history, with all its virtues and defects, than Gibbon. His learning was fully equal to his vast subject. Thus, commencing with expiring civilisation in ancient Rome, he continues on until the period of its final and perfect resurrection in Italy in the fifteenth century, and thus may be said to furnish the lights which are to guide us through the long interval of darkness which divides the old from the modern world. The range of his subject was fully equal to its duration. Goths, Huns, Tartars, and all the rude tribes of the North, are brought upon the stage, together with the more cultivated natives of the South,—the Greeks, Italians, and the intelligent Arab; and, as the scene shifts from one country to another, we behold its population depicted with that peculiarity of physiognomy, and studied propriety of costume, which belong to dramatic exhibition. For Gibbon was a more vivacious draughtsman than most writers of his school. He was, moreover, deeply versed in geography, chronology, antiquities, verbal criticism; in short, in all the sciences in any way subsidiary to his art. The extent of his subject enabled him to indulge in those elaborate disquisi-

tions, so congenial to the spirit of modern history, on the most momentous and interesting topics; while his early education enabled him to embellish the drier details of his narrative with the charms of a liberal and elegant scholarship.

What, then, was awanting to this accomplished writer? Good faith. His most elaborate efforts exhibit too often the perversion of learning and ingenuity to the vindication of preconceived hypotheses. He cannot indeed be convicted of ignorance or literal inaccuracy, as he has triumphantly proved in his discomfiture of the unfortunate Davis. But his disingenuous mode of conducting the argument leads precisely to the same unfair result. Thus, in his celebrated chapters on the "Progress of Christianity," which, he tells us, were reduced, by three successive revisals, from a bulky volume to their present size, he has often slurred over in the text such particulars as might reflect most credit on the character of religion, or shuffled them into a note at the bottom of the page; while all that admits of a doubtful complexion, in its early propagation, is ostentatiously blazoned, and set in contrast to the most amiable features of Paganism. At the same time, by a style of innuendo that conveys "more than meets the ear," he has contrived, with Iago-like duplicity, to breathe a taint of suspicion on the purity which he dares not openly assail. It is a consequence of this scepticism in Gibbon, as with Voltaire, that his writings are nowhere warmed with a generous moral sentiment. The most sublime of all spectacles,—that of the martyr who suffers for conscience' sake, and this equally whether his creed be founded in truth or error,—is contemplated by the historian with the smile or rather sneer of philosophic indifference. This is not only bad taste, as he is addressing a Christian audience,

but he thus voluntarily relinquishes one of the most powerful engines for the movement of human passion, which is never so easily excited as by deeds of suffering, self-devoted enthusiasm.

But although Gibbon was wholly defective in moral enthusiasm, his style is vivified by a certain exhilarating glow, that kindles a corresponding warmth in the bosom of his reader. This may perhaps be traced to his egotism, or, to speak more liberally, to an ardent attachment to his professional pursuits, and to his inextinguishable love of letters. This enthusiasm appears in almost every page of his great work, and enabled him to triumph over all its difficulties. It is particularly conspicuous whenever he touches upon Rome, the *Alma Mater* of science, whose adopted son he may be said to have been from his earliest boyhood. Whenever he contemplates her fallen fortunes, he mourns over her with the fond solicitude that might become an ancient Roman; and when he depicts her pristine glories, dimly seen through the mist of so many centuries, he does it with such vivid accuracy of conception, that the reader, like the traveller who wanders through the excavations of Pompeii, seems to be gazing on the original forms and brilliant colours of antiquity.

To Gibbon's egotism, in its most liberal sense—to his personal vanity—may be traced some of the peculiar defects for which his style is conspicuous. The historian of the Decline and Fall too rarely forgets his own importance in that of his subject. The consequence which he attaches to his personal labours is shown in a bloated dignity of expression, and an ostentation of ornament, that contrast whimsically enough with the trifling topics and commonplace thoughts in which, in the course of his long work, they are

occasionally employed. He nowhere moves along with the easy freedom of nature, but seems to leap, as it were, from tread to tread by a succession of strained, convulsive efforts. He affected, as he tells us, the light, festive raillery of Voltaire. But his cumbrous imitation of the mercurial Frenchman may remind one, to make use of a homely simile, of the ass in "Æsop's Fables," who frisked upon his master in imitation of the sportive gambols of the spaniel. The first two octavo volumes of Gibbon's History were written in a comparatively modest and unaffected manner; but when he had tasted the sweets of popular applause, and had been crowned as the historian of the day, his increased consequence becomes at once visible in the assumed stateliness and magnificence of his bearing.



GOETHE.

[BORN 1749. DIED 1832.]

CARLYLE.

WE find an artist, in the high and ancient meaning of that term, in the meaning which it may have borne long ago among the masters of ancient painting, and the fathers of poetry in England. We say that we trace in the creations of this man, belonging in every sense to our own time, some touches of that old divine spirit which had long passed away from among us; nay, which, as has often been laboriously demonstrated, was not to return to this world any more. Or, perhaps, we may come nearer our meaning, if we say that in Goethe we discover by far the most striking instance in our time of a writer who is, in strict speech, what philosophy can call a man. He is neither noble nor plebeian, neither liberal nor servile, nor infidel nor devotee; but the best excellence of all these joined in a pure union—"a clear and universal man."

Goethe's poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft, but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood; nay, it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry. All good men may be called poets in act or in word; all good poets are so in both. But Goethe, besides, appears to us as a person of that deep endowment and gifted vision, of that experience

also, and sympathy in the ways of all men, which qualify him to stand forth not only as the literary ornament, but in many respects, too, as the teacher and exemplar of his age. For, to say nothing of his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to live and to write, with a fidelity, an unwearied earnestness, of which there is no other living instance; of which, among British poets, especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance. And this, in our view, is the result: to our minds, in these soft melodious imaginations of his, there is embodied the wisdom which is proper to this time; the beautiful, the religious wisdom which may still, with something of its old impressiveness, speak to the whole soul; still, in these hard, unbelieving, utilitarian days, reveal to us glimpses of the unseen but not unreal world, that so the actual and the ideal may again meet together, and clear knowledge be again wedded to religion, in the life and business of men.

Participating deeply in all the influences of his age, he has from the first, at every new epoch, stood forth to elucidate the new circumstances of the time, to offer the instruction, the solace which that time required. His literary life divides itself into two portions widely different in character; the products of the first, once so new and original, have long, either directly or through the thousand thousand imitations of them, been familiar to us; with the products of the second, equally original, and in our day far more precious, we are yet little acquainted. These two classes of works stand curiously related with each other; at first view, in strong contradiction, yet in truth connected together by the strictest sequence. For Goethe has not only suffered and mourned in bitter agony under the spiritual perplexities of his time, but he has also mastered these; he is above them, and has

shown others how to rise above them. At one time we found him in darkness, and now he is in light; he was once an unbeliever, but now he is a believer.

For the rest, what sort of mind it is that has passed through this change, that has gained this victory; how rich and high a mind; how learned by study in all that is wisest, by experience in all that is most complex, the brightest as well as the blackest in man's existence; gifted with what insight, with what grace and power of utterance, we shall not for the present attempt discussing. All these the reader will learn who studies his writings with such attention as they merit, and by no other means. Of Goethe's dramatic, lyrical, didactic poems, in their thousandfold expressiveness, for they are full of expressiveness, we can here say nothing.

SCHILLER.

[BORN 1759. DIED 1805.]

CARLYLE.

ON forming for ourselves some picture of Schiller as a man, of what may be called his moral character, perhaps the very perfection of his manner of existence tends to diminish our estimate of its merits. What he aimed at he has attained in a singular degree. In his life we see not that the social affections played any deep part. As a son, husband, father, friend, he is ever kindly, honest, amiable; but rarely, if at all, do outward things stimulate him into what can be called passion. Of the wild loves and lamentations, and all the fierce ardour that distinguish, for instance, his Scottish contemporary Burns, there is scarcely any trace here. In fact, it was towards the ideal, not towards the actual, that Schiller's faith and hope were directed. His highest happiness lay not in outward honour, pleasure, social recreation—perhaps not even in friendly affection, such as the world could show it,—but in the realm of poetry, a city of the mind, where for him all that was true and noble had foundation. His habits, accordingly, though far from dissocial, were solitary; his chief business and chief pleasure lay in silent meditation.

Schiller's intellectual character has, as indeed is always the case, an accurate conformity with his moral one. Here, too, he is simple in his excellence; lofty rather than expan-

sive or varied; pure, divinely ardent, rather than great. A noble sensibility, the truest sympathy with nature in all forms, animates him; yet scarcely any creative gift altogether commensurate with this. If to his mind's eye all forms of nature have a meaning and beauty, it is only under a few forms, chiefly of the severe or pathetic kind, that he can body forth this meaning, can represent as a poet what, as a thinker, he discerns and loves. We might say his music is true spheral music, yet only with few tones in simple modulation; no full choral harmony is to be heard in it. That Schiller, at least in his later years, attained a genuine poetic style, and dwelt more or less in the perennial regions of his art, no one will deny; yet still his poetry shows rather like a partial than a universal gift—the laboured product of certain faculties, rather than the spontaneous product of his whole nature. At the summit of the pyre there is, indeed, white flame, but the materials are not all in flame, perhaps not all ignited. Nay, often it seems to us as if poetry were, on the whole, not his essential gift—as if his genius were reflective in a still higher degree than creative; philosophical and oratorical, rather than poetic. To the last there is a stiffness in him, a certain infusibility. His genius is not an Æolian harp for the common wind to play with, and make wild free melody; but a scientific harmonica, which, being artfully touched, will yield rich notes, though in limited measure. It may be, indeed, or rather it is highly probable, that of the gifts which lay in him, only a small portion was unfolded; for we are to recollect that nothing came to him without a strenuous effort, and that he was called away at middle age. At all events, here, as we find him, we should say that, of all his endowments, the most perfect is understanding. Accurate, thorough insight is a quality we miss in none of

his productions, whatever else may be wanting. He has an intellectual vision, clear, wide, piercing, methodical; a truly philosophic eye. Yet, in regard to this also, it is to be remarked, that the same simplicity, the same want of universality again displays itself. He looks aloft rather than around. It is in high, far-seeing philosophic views that he delights; in speculations on art, on the dignity and destiny of man, rather than on the common doings and interests of men.



DE FOE.

[BORN 1663. DIED 1731.]

HUGH MILLER.

THE "Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" appeared in the year 1719, and at once rose to the popularity which it has ever yet maintained. But it failed to attract the notice of the critics. The men who sat in judgment on the small elegancies of the wits of the reign of George I., and marked how sentences were balanced and couplets rounded, could not stoop to notice a composition so humble as a novel written by a self-taught man. But his singularly vivacious production forced a way for itself, leaving the fine sentences and smart couplets to be forgotten. In a short time it was known all over Europe; several translations appeared simultaneously in France, much about the period when Le Sage was engaged in writing, in one of the smaller houses of one of the most neglected suburbs of Paris, his "Gil Blas" and his "Devil on Two Sticks;" and such was the rage of imitation it excited in Germany, that no fewer than forty-one German novels were produced that had Robinson Crusoe for their heroes, and fifteen others that, though equally palpable imitations, had heroes that bore a different name.

De Foe we must regard as, with all his faults, a well-meaning man, who had been an object of persecution himself,

and had learned to sympathise with the persecuted. The Scotch were very angry with him for the part which he took in the Union; but that did not prevent his doing justice in his history to their long struggles for ecclesiastical independence; and religion never comes across him in his novels —some of them quite loose enough—but he has always a good word to say in its behalf. He was no very profound theologian. Friday, in the dialogue part of Crusoe, is nearly as subtle a divine as his master; and when poor Miss Olive Primrose instances, as a proof of her large acquirements in controversy, and her consequent ability of converting Squire Thornhill, that she had read all the "Religious Courtship," another of De Foe's works, we at once agree that the worthy doctor, her father, did quite right in sending her off to help her mother in making the gooseberry-pie.

JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

[BORN 1763. DIED 1825.]

CARLYLE.

SON of a teacher in Wunsiedel Bayreuth, this whimsical thinker was destined for theology, from which, however, his vagrant genius soon diverged into poetry and philosophy, to the neglect and ere long to the abandonment of his appointed profession. He began authorship with the strangest books, "Selection from the Papers of the Devil," and so forth. In these indescribable performances, the splendid faculties of the writer, luxuriating as they seem in utter riot, could not be disputed; nor, with all its extravagance, the fundamental strength, honesty, and tenderness of his nature. Genius will reconcile men to much. By degrees Jean Paul began to be considered not a strange, crackbrained mixture of enthusiast and buffoon, but a man of infinite humour, sensibility, force, and penetration. His writings procured him friends and fame, and at length a wife and a settled provision. A huge, irregular man, both in mind and person (for his portrait is quite a physiognomical study), full of fire, strength, and impetuosity, Richter seems at the same time to have been in the highest degree mild, simple-hearted, humane. He was fond of conversation, and might well shine in it; he talked as he wrote, in a style of his own, full of wild strength and charms, to which his natural Bayreuth accent often gave additional effect; yet he loved retirement, the country, and all natural things.

His chief productions are novels, with many lighter pieces, and two works of a higher order, "Hesperus" and "Titan," the largest and best of his novels. It was the former that first (in 1795) introduced him into decisive and universal estimation with his countrymen; the latter he himself, with the most judicious of his critics, regarded as his masterpiece. But the name novelist, as we in England must understand it, would ill describe so vast and discursive a genius; for with all his grotesque, tumultuous pleasantry, Richter is a man of a truly earnest, nay, high and solemn character, and seldom writes without a meaning far beyond the sphere of common romancers. "Hesperus" and "Titan" themselves, though in form nothing more than "novels of real life," as the Minerva Press would say, have solid metal enough in them to furnish whole circulating libraries, were it beaten into the usual filigree, and much which, attenuate it as we might, no quarterly subscriber could well carry with him. Amusement is often, in part almost always, a mean with Richter, rarely or never his highest end. His thoughts, his feelings, the creatures of his spirit, walk before us embodied under wondrous shapes, in motley and ever fluctuating groups; but his essential character, however he disguise it, is that of a philosopher and moral poet, whose study has been human nature, whose delight and best endeavour are, with all that is beautiful, and tender, and mysteriously sublime in the fate or history of man. This is the purport of his writings, whether their form be that of fiction or of truth; the spirit that pervades and ennobles his delineations of common life, his wild, wayward dreams, allegories, and shadowy imaginings, no less than his disquisitions of a nature directly scientific.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

[BORN 1771. DIED 1832.]

CARLYLE.

SHORN of the falsifying nimbus of popularity, and reduced to his own natural dimensions, there remains the reality, Walter Scott, and what we can find in him; to be accounted great or not great, according to the dialects of men. Friends to precision of epithet will probably deny his title to the name "great." It seems to us there goes other stuff to the making of great men than can be detected here. One knows not what idea worthy of the name of great—what purpose, instinct, or tendency that could be called great—Scott ever was inspired with. His life was worldly, his ambitions were worldly. There is nothing spiritual in him; all is economical, material, of the earth earthy. A love of picturesque, of beautiful, vigorous, graceful things; a genuine love, yet not more genuine than has 'dwelt in hundreds of men named minor poets. This is the highest quality to be discerned in him. His power of representing these things, too—his poetic power, like his moral power—was a genius *in extenso*, as we may say, not *in intenso*. In action and speculation, broad as he was, he rose nowhere high. Productive without measure as to quantity, in quality he for the most part transcended but a little way the region of commonplace.

It has been said, "no man has written as many volumes with so few sentences that can be quoted." Winged words were not his vocation; nothing urged him that way; the great mystery of existence was not too great for him, did not drive him into rocky solitudes to wrestle it for an answer, to be answered or to perish. He had nothing of the martyr; into no "dark region to slay monsters for us" did he, either led or driven, venture down; his conquests were for his own behoof, mainly conquests over common market labour, and reckonable in good metallic coin of the realm. The thing he had faith in, except power,—power of what sort soever, and even of the rudest sort,—would be difficult to point out. One sees not that he believed in anything; nay, he did not even disbelieve; but quietly acquiesced, and made himself at home in a world of conventionalities: the false, the semi-false, and the true were alike true in this, that they were there and had power in their hands more or less. It was well to feel so, and yet not well. We find it written, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion;" but surely it is a doubtful woe to them that are at ease in Babel or Domdaniel. On the other hand, he wrote many volumes, amazing many thousands of men. Shall we call this great? It seems to us there swells and struggles another sort of spirit in the inward parts of great men.

Yet, on the other hand, the surliest critic must allow that Scott was a genuine man, which itself is a great matter. No affectation, fantasticality, or distortion dwelt in him; no shadowy cant. Nay, withal, was he not a right brave and strong man, according to his kind! What a load of toil, what a measure of felicity, he quietly bore along with him! with what quiet strength he both worked on this earth and enjoyed in it, invincible to evil fortune and to good! A most

composed, invincible man; in difficulty and distress knowing no discouragement, Samson-like carrying off on his strong Samson shoulders the gates that would imprison him; in danger and in menace laughing at the whisper of fear. And then, with such a sunny current of true humour and humanity, a free joyful sympathy with so many things, what of fire he had, all lying so beautifully latent, as radical latent heat, as fruitful internal warmth of life, a most robust, healthy man. The truth is, our best definition of Scott were perhaps even this: if he was no great man, yet something much pleasanter to be a robust, thoroughly healthy, and, withal, very prosperous and victorious man. For does not health mean harmony, the synonym of all that is true, justly-ordered good; is it not in some sense the net-total, as shown by experiment, of whatever worth is in us? Blessed is the healthy nature; it is the coherent, sweetly co-operative, not incoherent, self-distracting, self-destructive one. In the harmonious adjustment and play of all the faculties, the just balance of oneself gives a just feeling towards all men and all things. Glad light from within radiates outwards, and enlightens and embellishes.

MACAULAY.

[BORN 1800. DIED 1859.]

GEORGE GILFILLAN.

HAS Thomas Macaulay genius? He has; but he has got it as the alchemists expected to get gold, by transmutation. He has transmuted vast learning and varied accomplishments into one sweet and subtle thing, which really deserves the name of genius. He was wont, even when young, to be surnamed "Macaulay the Omniscient." History, law, literature, political economy—nay, theology and science—seem, so far as purposes of illustration require, to be perfectly at his command. There are probably many who know as much or more than he, but few have so wrought their knowledge into the substance of their minds—few have so sublimated the dead fuel into flame—flame brisk and unburdened by the masses it consumed. Many call for their stores of knowledge, and it comes forth from the lumber-room of their mind lumber as it had entered—cold, and stiff, and dead; but from Macaulay's inner chamber it issues "as in dance," warm, spiritualised, moving to the music of his elegant mind. Thomas Macaulay is not an original thinker; he has no insight into any part of this universe entirely new; no burning gold of inspiration has been emptied on his young head; no swarm of bees fastened on his infant lips; he has not been called, like

Milton, Burke, and Coleridge by a special mission to utter transcendental truth in transcendental eloquence; nor, like Bentham, to lay the foundations of a new science, deep, strong, and smooth "as a pavement of adamant;" but he is the poet of facts. In conversation he pours out torrents of facts. In his speeches he hangs strings of facts round one or two master-principles. In his review or tales you find floods of facts. In his poetry he sets fire to facts, in themselves as dry as Horner's catalogue of ships, and you are reminded of stubble a-blaze. Like his own favourite Bunyan, he unites prosaic and literal to ideal and imaginative qualities. Scarcely one of his sentences is poetical, and yet the whole of his article is a perfect poem; just as hardly a sentence of Bunyan has an image or flower, and yet the whole is steeped in the essence of imagination. The stream of poesy flowing underground is in both betrayed by now and then a solitary word. And the reason is, that to both facts are real existences; they do not lie leaning upon the cold page; they stand upright, and through the golden haze that covers the eye of the seer look ideal. The facts too, though simple, are select and suitable for imaginative treatment.

There is a youthfulness of imagination about Macaulay which is delightful to see. Shallow criticasters say of him, that he writes like a schoolboy—paying him unintentionally one of the highest compliments they could bestow upon a full-grown and thoroughly-furnished man. The secret, as it seems to us, of perfect composition, is mainly wisdom uttered in youthful language. Coleridge calls genius "the power of reproducing the feelings and freshness of youth into the powers and passions of manhood." So Macaulay talks of the deepest speculation of polity and poesy with all the

enthusiasm of an Eton boy. One "childish thing," however, it were well for him to put away: we mean a certain mannerism of style which adheres to all his articles. He is the most easily detected of writers, except, perhaps, Christopher North. You cannot read two sentences without being aware of his identity. All his prominent qualities; his muscular nerve; his balanced antitheses; his sharp, short, form of sentence; his thoroughly English spirit; his enthusiasm breaking out at intervals; his elaborate pictures set at distances; his decisive tone; his unbounded command of illustration, his keen and crushing contempt; his intimate knowledge of floating personal history—all these lie upon the surface, and are perpetually produced in every one of his compositions.

But far better than even these celebrated articles are his "Lays of Ancient Rome." He goes down the battle like a scythed chariot. What homely grandeur stamps their every line! How completely does he reproduce those early Roman days! Standing on the old Tarpeian rock he blows his magic horn, and History gives up the dead which are in it; and the foster-babes of the old she-wolf—the men of iron—rise, an exceeding great army, and range around him; and, hark, he shouts, and they echo the thrilling cry—

> "Hail to the great asylum,
> Hail to the hill-tops seven;
> Hail to the fire which burns for aye,
> And the shield which fell from heaven."

THACKERAY.

[BORN 1811. DIED 1863.]

HANNAY.

IT was his frankness and *bonhommie* that made Thackeray delightful in a *tête-a-tête*, and gave a pleasant human flavour to talk full of sense, and wisdom, and experience, and lighted up by the gaiety of the true London man of the world. Though he said witty things now and then, he was not a wit in the sense in which Jerrold was, and he complained sometimes that his best things occurred to him after the occasion had gone by. He shone most, as in his books, in little subtle remarks on life, and little descriptive sketches suggested by the talk. We remember, in particular, one evening, after a dinner-party at his house, a fancy picture he drew of Shakespeare during his last years at Stratford, sitting out in the summer afternoon watching the people, which all who heard it, brief as it was, thought equal to the best things in his lectures, But it was not for this sort of talent—rarely exerted by him—that people admired his conversation. They admired above all the broad sagacity, sharp insight, large and tolerant liberality, which marked him as one who was a sage as well as a story-teller, and whose stories were valuable because he was a sage. Another point of likeness to him in Scott was, that he never over-valued story-telling, or forgot that there were

nobler things in literature than the purest creations of which the object was amusement. "I would give half my fame," wrote Scott, "if by so doing I could place the other half on a solid basis of science and learning." "Now is the time," wrote Thackeray to a young friend in 1849, "to lay in stock. I wish I had had five years' reading before I took to our trade."

Thackeray's celebrity, and the impression made by his distinct and peculiar genius, so different from that of the common sentimental schools, provoked a certain amount of reaction. Plebeians, who disliked him as a gentleman; Mechanics' Institute men, who disliked him as a scholar; Radicals, who knew that he associated with the aristocracy; and the numerous weaklings, to whom his severe truth and perfect honesty of art seemed horrible, after the riotous animal spirits, jolly caricature, and lachrymose softness of the style which he was putting out of fashion;—this crew, we say, was by no means satisfied with the undoubted fact that Thackeray was becoming the favourite writer of the cultivated classes. They accordingly began to call his honesty cynicism, and his accuracy reporting. But tears are pure in proportion to the depth from which they come, and not to the quantity in which they flow; and the tenderness of a writer is to be estimated by the quality of his pathos. What these people called hardness was fidelity to truth, and what they called stenographic detail was finish of art. The richer imaginativeness of Esmond, and the freer play of feeling in which the author allowed himself to indulge when dealing with a past age, came in good time to rebuke cavilers, and prove that Thackeray's mind was rich as well as wide. "Esmond," we take it, is the favourite novel of his choicest admirers.

Thackeray was emphatically English,—English as distinct from Scotch, no less than English as distinct from Continental,—a different type of great man from Scott, and a different type of great man from Balzac. The highest purely English novelist since Fielding, he combined Addison's love of virtue with Johnson's hatred of cant, Horace Walpole's lynx-like eye for the mean and ridiculous, with the gentleness and wide charity for mankind as a whole of Goldsmith. *Non omnis mortuus est.* He will be remembered in his due succession with these men for ages to come, as long as the hymn of praise rises in the old Abbey of Westminster, and wherever the English tongue is native to men, from the banks of the Ganges to those of the Mississippi.

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